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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ACADEMICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION:
A SOCIALIZATION PERSPECTIVE

by

©

SHARON M. McGUIRE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ACADEMICS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: A SOCIALIZATION PERSPECTIVE submitted by SHARON M. MCGUIRE in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Supervisor

M Haughey

K.L. Ward

Date: April 6, 1988

DEDICATION

To my husband, Owen, and to my children J.J., Erin, Christopher, Tara and Fynn, in deep-felt appreciation to them for making the journey with me; and to my mother Charlotte I. McCool and mother-in-law Mildred C. McGuire for their loving support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the transitional experiences of faculty members as they adapt to the role requirements of a distance education university. Four exploratory questions guided this study: 1) What factors led to the initial career choice in distance education? 2) What was the nature and the impact of encounter experiences for academics entering a distance education faculty? 3) How do academics perceive themselves as they fulfill their roles as distance educators? 4) What are the implications for researchers and policy makers in the fields of educational administration and organizational behavior?

Conceptually, the study questions were approached from the perspectives of work transitions and organizational socialization. Methodologically, an ethnographic approach was used in this study, which allows the researcher to use the culture of the setting and the personal accounts of population members to account for socially acquired learning. Athabasca University in Athabasca, Alberta, Canada was the field chosen in which to conduct this study. Data was gathered from indepth interviews with organizational members and from documentary evidence. The data were analyzed on an on-going basis to determine transitional experiences as perceived by academic members and the impact of these experiences on role adaptations.

New faculty members encountered organizational tasks and an organizational environment that differed from similar previous experiences, requiring the adoption of new behavioral responses and coping strategies. As newcomers adapted to the new environment, they encountered an organization which was also experiencing the problems of change. These problems had a synergistic effect on the complexity and stressfulness of the socialization process. After two to four years in the environment, most respondents had not achieved a "comfortable fit" within the institution.

The findings and conclusions of this study have implications for administrators in considering the criteria for selecting applicants, employment interview practices and orientation and training of new professional staff members.

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The entire staff of Athabasca University who showed that they cared.

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Chapter 1:

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Background

Distance education has become an attractive option for providing educational opportunities to widely dispersed target populations at potentially significantly less cost than more conventional forms of education (Kaye, 1981). Although correspondence methods of teaching university-level education have been used for 150 years, more recent technological advancements coupled with humanistic concerns have made distance education an option of increasing choice for both developed countries and third world nations. Some distance education universities are patterned after the Open University founded in Britain in 1968. Kaye and Rumble (1981:16) describe the Open University model as

> an autonomous institution established solely and specifically for external students, using a variety of distance-teaching methods to provide specially prepared multi-media courses, and with the formal responsibility for evaluation and accreditation.

The founding of the Open University in 1968 gave renewed impetus to the development of distance education in a number of countries. In Canada, prior to the establishment of the Open University of British Columbia, June 1987, there was one autonomous distance education university -- Athabasca University, located in Athabasca, Alberta, and founded in 1975.

Due to relatively small number of similar institutions in Canada, and the short life-span of distance education in this country, few academics have work experience or training compatible with distance education methods or philosophies. Rather, potential academic candidates are drawn from the more traditional classroom-based, semester-sequenced, paced-learning setting of most academic institutions. These academics have usually been socialized to accept a relatively explicit set of appropriate role behaviors and educational philosophies as integral components of professional activity. Distance education, by nature of its interaction with external environments, by its mandate and by its technology, may require a somewhat different constellation of role behaviors from academics employed in this facet of education.

What are these role behaviors and how do academics acquire them? How is the transition from "traditional" university academic to "distance education" university academic accomplished? Research into situational aspects of academic socialization appears to have been limited (Corcoran and Clark, 1984) as has been the research on distance educators as a professional body (Holmberg, 1982). It would be of some interest to explore the notion of "role adaptation" as experienced by academics as they progress from newcomer to productive, functional members of a small, but growing, arm of the post secondary educational community.

Significance of the Study

The proposed study has significance in three areas -- contribution to the existing literature in socialization and career socialization processes and role acquisition; further development of understandings related to role behaviors and cultural learnings for academics working in distance education institutions; and formulation of practical techniques and strategies for educational administrators concerned with achieving optimal "fit" between organizational needs and individual abilities and attributes.

Socialization and role-acquisition processes have received a great deal of attention from sociologists and psychologists. Sociologists tend to approach their studies from the viewpoint of discovering the general properties of the work experiences of people. Psychologists tend to focus on the personality characteristics of people occupying roles. A perspective which recognizes the unfolding character of social life and the interplay of occupational setting and the people who occupy those settings would tend to provide a framework for integrating and expanding existing knowledge. Such a perspective is recommended by Van Maanen (1977b), Schein (1983b), Louis (1980) and others.

The particular setting chosen for this study is an educational institution with a mandate to "remove barriers that traditionally restrict access to and success in university-level studies" (Athabasca University Mission Statement, 1985). This study seeks to discover what, if any, differences organizational mandate makes to role behaviors, attitudes and cultural environments for academics working as professionals within such a setting. In addition, the proposed study addresses a largely neglected area of concern -- the distance educator.

Organizational researchers and practitioners have long been concerned with maximizing worker productivity, efficiency and effectiveness (for example, see Weber, 1949: Peters and Waterman, 1982). Entire departments in larger organizations are devoted to hiring, developing and controlling personnel who are charged with responsibilities of achieving organizational ends. There is considerable evidence to indicate that the entry and encounter experiences of organizational newcomers are crucial to the formation of attitudes toward, and understanding of, occupational roles. For example, French, Kast and Rosenszweig (1985:48) state

> There is a law of primacy which holds that the earlier an experience, the more important its effect because it influences how later experiences will be interpreted. The newcomer entering the organization is uniquely subject to new influences. When he enters the organization he is uncertain about the role he will play and his concept of

> himself is thrown into question. Finding himself in a stressful and "unfrozen" situation, he is motivated to reduced stress by becoming incorporated into the interior of the company. Being thus motivated to be accepted by this new social system, he is more receptive to cues from his environment than he will ever be again, and what he learns at the beginning will become the core of his organizational identity.

This study assists in illuminating the nature and impact of entry experiences for academics as an aid to decision-making and strategic planning for educational administrators concerned with organizational effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the transitional experiences of academics as they adapt to the role requirements of a non-traditional education institution as exemplified in its Mission and Mandate statement. Specifically, the study focuses on the following questions:

1. What factors led to the initial career choice in distance education?
2. What was the nature and impact of encounter experiences for academics entering a distance education facility?
3. How do academics perceive themselves as they fulfill their roles as distance educators?
4. What are the implications for researchers and policy makers in the fields of educational administration and organizational behavior?

A more detailed discussion of these questions follows.

What factors led to the initial career choice in distance education?

The career pre-entry stage, termed "anticipatory socialization" (Merton, 1957) is defined by Corcoran and Clark (1984:133) as "the process by which persons choose occupations and are recruited to them, gradually taking on the values of the group to which they aspire" (see "Anticipatory Socialization" page 45). Although increasing research interest is being devoted to the effects of career choice, there tends to be less emphasis on the processes of career choice. Douglas T. Hall (1976:44), for example, notes

> more small theories of how people perform various career processes are needed: what leads to career search, how a person becomes committed to an area of work, how one chooses an organization or decides to quit ...

This study proposes to contribute to this general area of knowledge.

The proposed research setting is in an area of adult education known as "distance education". Distance education is a term which is generally recognized to have wider connotations than the term "correspondence study". According to Holmberg (1981:1), distance education is

> learning supported by those teaching methods in which the physical separateness of learners and teachers, the interactive as well as the preactive phase of teaching is conducted through print, mechanical or electrical devices.

In addition, distance education policy at Athabasca University includes elimination of prior academic credential requirements for students, monthly rather than semester-based enrolments, extended time periods of study, and telephone tutor support to students as further conceptualizations of the concept of distance education.

Faculty members recruited to a distance education organization enter a somewhat different role than that played by the academic in the conventional classroom-based setting. As distance education in Canada is a comparatively recent phenomenon, it might be assumed that membership participation in such an institution would constitute a major career passage and role change which would require some level of adaptation into the new social setting (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Moreover, relatively little research has been done on faculty subcultures as such (Cresswell and Bean, 1981; Caplow and McGee, 1961; Wilson, 1942) and even less on faculty subcultures in distance education settings (Holmberg, 1982). The study attempts to add to this area of research.

What was the nature and the impact of encounter experiences for academics entering a distance education facility?

Individuals undergoing an organizational transition are likely to be in an anxiety-producing situation. Previously learned routines, responses, actions, behaviors, concepts of time and space, understandings of prestige and status, as well as other factors once employed for handling interactions and predicting responses are called into some degree of question (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Caplow and McGee, 1961; Becker et al., 1961; Whyte, 1955). In this psychological state of "unfrozenness" individuals likely seek to "normalize" their positions by learning the values, attitudes and behaviors which will influence future career development. Subsequent organizational commitment, performance standards and job attitudes can be strongly influenced by initial experiences (French et al., 1985). Thus, the study seeks to link encounter experiences (see "Encounter" page 48) with role acquisition (see "Role Acquisition" page 54) as an on-going process within a particular sub-culture.

How do academics perceive themselves as they fulfill their roles as distance educators?

"Roles" are defined by Van Maanen and Schein (1979:226) as "often diverse behaviors more or less expected of persons who occupy a defined position within a particular social system, in this case, an organization." Role information from employer to employee may be explicit, as in job descriptions, or implicit, as in the strongly held assumptions and expectations of referent groups (see "Adaptation" page 52; "Role Acquisition" page 54). However, the degree of internalized commitment, job involvement and attitude adaptation is likely to be a matter of personal perspective at some level.

Successful adjustment to a social world depends to some extent on accurate perceptions. Perceptions, or the means by which stimuli affect an individual, serve to define meaning or definition in many life situations (Robbins, 1986). As information concerning human affairs is always incomplete, people make sense of their experiences by going beyond them in an effort to achieve structure, stability and meaning (Wilmot, 1979). Thus, meanings have a degree of uniqueness because of people's individual interpretations. In this sense, individuals can be seen to formulate their roles through their perceptions or the means by which they process stimuli in order to decide or to act.

French et al. (1985:147) postulate that

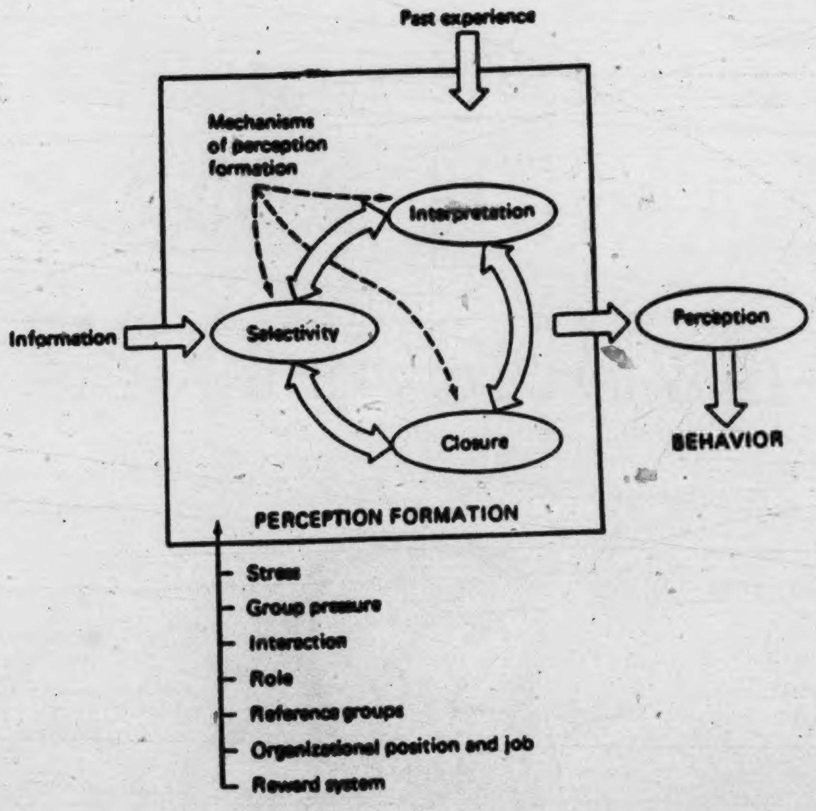
> people behave on the bases of what is perceived rather than what is. A direct line to 'truth' is often assumed, but each person really has only one point of view, based on individual perceptions of the real world.

Drawing on the work of Joseph A. Litterer (1973), French et al. (1985:149-150) provide a useful model of perception formation and its effect on behavior (Figure 1, page 12).

In this model, perception processes are identified as selectivity, closure and interpretation. Selectivity occurs as individuals are unable to register all the data that the senses provide thus necessitating choices among competing stimuli. These choices are based on external pressures such as stress, group experiences, role, and reward systems which guide individuals to select certain stimuli from the voluminous amounts of information available to them. Often, that which is selected tends to be the most

FIGURE 1

PERCEPTION PROCESSES


Past experience
Mechanisms of perception formation
Interpretation
Information
Selectivity
Perception
Closure
BEHAVIOR
PERCEPTION FORMATION
Stress
Group pressure
Interaction
Role
Reference groups
Organizational position and job
Reward system

Source: French, Kast and Rosenzweig, 1985:149.

supportive and satisfying, while that which tends to be disturbing is ignored.

Closure relates to the tendency of an individual to form a complete picture of any given situation whether sufficient information is available or not. Handy (1985:75) further comments that closure is affected by the order in which data is collected. The earlier the information, if received, the more subsequent information is colored. As well, Handy notes, we collect a surprisingly small amount of information on which we base categories and stereotypes.

Past experiences, combined with each individual's value system provide a framework for interpretation of the selected stimuli. Interpretation activities also tend to be supportive in nature. Handy (1985:75) adds "we look for data to support our initial assumptions, and neglect or do not notice contradictory evidence".

Meaning is shared in some instances to a relatively high degree. French et al. (1985:147) point out that "some considerations can be verified in order that several or many individuals can agree on a consistent set of facts." However, considerations such as selectivity, closure and interpretation of presented data affect understanding and behavior in many instances. French et al. (1985:147) explain "in most real-life situations many conditions are not verifiable and are heavily value laden." It is thus the value set within which individuals form perceptions of received stimuli which subsequently affect role assumptions and behavior.

Further, this study accepts the view that human beings are active, interpreting entities. This posture derives from the "symbolic interaction" perspective (Blumer 1969) which postulates that people's meanings are based on the meaning they assign to a subject, and that the meaning of a thing is derived from social interaction through an individual perspective. According to the symbolic interactionist view it is impossible to talk about an object having information. Rather, a person imputes information so that what is known about the world is a product of one's perceptual and definitional processes (Faules and Alexander, 1978).

In this sense of symbolic interactionism, this study seeks to explore individual definitions and perceptions of role expectancies and behavior as a guide to the manner in which role incumbents adapt and use information discovered through encounter experiences (See "Metamorphosis" page 66).

What are the implications for researchers and policy makers in the fields of educational administration and organizational behavior?

The stability and productiveness of any organization depend in large measure on the way newcomers to various organizational positions come to carry out their tasks (Peters and Waterman, 1982). When positions are filled smoothly, the continuity of the organization's mission is maintained, and the predictability of the organization's performance is left intact, and, in the short run at least, the survival of the organization is assured (Van Maanen, 1978). Thus, researchers and policy makers concerned with organizational effectiveness and maximization of human productivity will have some concern in evolving strategies of integrating newcomers into organizations.

Van Maanen (1978:34-36) offers some suggestions as to the importance of managerial awareness of and concern for greater understanding of socialization processes. First, experiences can shape and control the performances and ambitions of their members. Second, the current trend in organizations is to decrease control by direct supervision, and immediate application of rewards and punishments. Thus one mechanism to control and direct behavior can be the socialization strategies which could affect the probability of desired commitment, professionalization and productivity. Third, socialization processes are not processes of some fixed evolutionary pattern. They are matters to be considered as input to rational decision making in policy formulations and reformulations. Finally, increasing awareness and interest in the strategies of people processing may be a matter of some urgency by professionals with a concern for the effective utilization of resources -- both material and human.

The study strives to develop increased understanding and awareness of socialization processes as a guide to managerial action and as a basis for further research.

Delimitations

The population in this study are members of Athabasca University who have been designated at the level of associate, assistant or full professor, according to Athabasca University Faculty Association Terms and Conditions of Employment. Approximately 45 people comprise this population and are presumed to have had a variety of educational training and experiential backgrounds. The points of convergence are expected to cluster about their similar roles within a particular organization with a specific mandate in the field of education.

For the purposes of this study, tenure conferral (or "continuing appointment" in Athabasca University Terms and Conditions terminology) has been selected as a determinable point in a career path which signals agreement by both the organization and the individual of some level of mutual acceptance.

Six persons who have recently undergone, are about to undergo, or are in the tenure process were requested to cooperate in data collection. At this stage of their career development as distance educators each incumbent will have been employed by Athabasca University a minimum of two years. Continuing appointment processes as specified in the Athabasca University Faculty Terms and Conditions Agreement will constitute a reasonably stable set of procedures for all respondents. Possible results of the continuing appointment process are conferral of tenure, extension of probationary appointment or denial of appointment. Respondents who have completed the process will be designated into one of the first two categories.

For this group, recall of choice procedures and entry experiences should be reasonably fresh, yet their respective terms of residency may allow for some reflection and perspective on the process. In addition, due to the use of in-depth interviews (see "Interviewing" page 78) as the primary method of data gathering, a larger number of respondents, at least in the initial phases, would not allow for the desired level of interaction, given the complexity of the human experience and the restrictions of a study conducted by a single researcher.

Limitations

As the study is limited to one distance education unit, embedded in a particular culture, the results may not be transferable to other situations. Participation throughout the study was voluntary. Respondents expressed general willingness to discuss somewhat personally sensitive issues should they arise. As responses were subjective accounts of previous events and experiences, selective recall, individual perceptions, and faulty recall may have limited the study and affected the data reports.

Chapter 2:

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature which forms the conceptualization of the study is to be found in three areas of focus: distance education, socialization and transition and organizational culture. Each area will be discussed in the sections which follow.

Distance Education

Historically, in Britain, there has been a distinction between teaching and accreditation. Thus, the University of London, established in 1836, registered and examined students for external degrees. To meet the needs of students from the U.K. and other countries who were enroled in this accreditation program, various private concerns such as the University Correspondence College and Wolsey Hall, arose to provide correspondence courses to students for London external degrees (Kaye, 1981:15).

For over a century, correspondence courses have made a substantial contribution to education in many countries. However, due to a number of factors, including the entrepreneurial nature of many of these institutions which required them to show a profit, as well as lack of formal accreditation procedures, correspondence education lacked the prestige commonly associated with credentials received from conventional institutions (Daniel and Stroud, 1981).

The Open University in Britain

In 1964, Harold Wilson, Leader of the British Labour Party, called for the establishment of a "University of the Air". The purpose was to respond to the need to improve training for industry coupled with the desire to prevent wastage of talent arising from unequal educational opportunities. Eventually this institution was planned and mandated as the Open University (Rumble, 1982). This exercise in the democratization of education was fueled by developments in technology which provided a means of participation rates in higher education, while alleviating pressures on the existing educational system.

The aim of the Open University, according to Rumble (1982:10) was

> to provide opportunities at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level of higher education to all those who for any reason have been or are being precluded from achieving their aims through an existing institution of higher education.

The objectives of the Open University, as set forth by the Planning Committee and Advisory Board in 1966, are described by Rumble (1982:8-10) as follows

> 1. It was to be open. No formal educational qualifications were to be required of applicants who (subject to quotas) would be admitted on a 'first come, first served' basis.
>
> 2. There was to be an emphasis on academic standards: "it must be made clear that there can be no question of offering to students a make-shift project, inferior in quality to other universities."
>
> 3. It would offer degree courses primarily in areas of contemporary social, industrial and commercial importance; basic subjects like English, Mathematics and the foundations of Science; and a range of cultural courses.
>
> 4. Student success would be determined by a combination of continuous assessment and final examination conducted through external examiners.

5. The presentation of courses would involve a combination of television, radio, correspondence materials, programmed instruction, tutorials and practicals, short residential courses, and study and discussion at community viewing or study centers.

This conceptualization of an approach to university education appeared to require new terminology which would express the noncontiguous nature of the communication involved between institution and learner (Holmberg, 1981). "Distance education" became the most widely accepted term for activities where the act of learning is separated from the act of teaching (Keegan, 1980).

The Open University was notable for the political will behind its establishment. This political support resulted in large resources and some protection from interference as the new institution established its foundations. To many educators, the Open University heralded a revolution in distance education, and in the 10 years which followed 1970, distance education developed more than it had in the previous century (Daniel and Stroud, 1981:146).

Athabasca University

Athabasca University in Alberta, Canada was to have a different genesis. Laurie Hughes, in his book "The First Athabasca University" describes the beginnings of Athabasca University, which are outlined here. In the late 1960's, greater numbers of students chose to attend university, placing an intolerable burden on existing facilities and budgets, particularly at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The Social Credit Party, then in power in the Provincial Legislature, planned Athabasca University as a fourth, campus-based, provincial university. However, as suddenly as enrolments had increased, they began to level off. In August, 1971, the Social Credit Party who had ruled the legislature for 36 years, was swept out of power by the Progressive Conservatives. All capital projects came under review, including the new Athabasca University, which represented a possible cash outlay of $70 million.

Other forces were at work to create an institution which would act as an alternative to the existing centers of education. Most important was the Worth report entitled "A Choice of Futures" which described an "Alberta Academy" aimed at the distinctive needs of life-long learning. Worth envisioned Athabasca University as the "host university" for the new academy which would represent a break with the institutional tradition of a central place for learning. In 1972, a new Athabasca University was created to undertake a pilot project on the design and delivery of multi-media, university-level courses to off-campus students. By 1975, the Government issued an Order-in-Council establishing Athabasca University, and charging it to apply new technology and new procedures to improve educational opportunities for adults. In 1984, in keeping with the

Alberta Government's policy of decentralization, Athabasca University was relocated from the metropolitan center of Edmonton, to the town of Athabasca, a community of 1600 people, 100 miles to the north. This move not only created a third crises of identity and survival at the fledgling university (Spronk, 1987), but also emphasized the blurred relationship between Athabasca University and its base of political support.

Daniel and Stroud (1981:148) commenting upon the creation and growth of Canadian distance education facilities, indicated that Athabasca University had a difficult gestation period as it did not develop from a base of political support which led to a certain inherent instability. Despite the many difficult factors the new University encountered in its beginning years, it achieved some measure of international reputation for its innovative approach to adult education, its technology and the quality of its educational product. Perraton (1982: 17) specifically mentions achievements in the high quality of teaching materials, the sophistication of support services and the development of curricula specifically designed for adult students.

Loosely based on the Open University of Britain model which was widely regarded as the leader in distinguishing distance education from correspondence courses, Athabasca University was envisioned to offer part time adult students innovative instructional resources for independent learning which would be more cost effective than the high costs entailed at existing universities. As life-long learning was a focus, there was less emphasis on program than at the Open University, although degrees were designed with both core and residential components which students desiring the full credential would be required to meet.

As an open university, Athabasca admits students over the age of 18 regardless of prior academic achievement. Enrolments can occur each month of the year, and courses are offered in a variety of formats to provide time flexibility for learners who typically must fit their studies in among other life commitments. The mandate of Athabasca University is stated in the Athabasca University Mission Statement, 1985, which reads:

> Athabasca University is dedicated to the removal of barriers that traditionally restrict studies and to increasing the equality of educational opportunity for all adult Canadians regardless of their geographical location and prior academic credentials. In common with all universities, Athabasca University is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship, and to being of service to the general public.

Difference Between Traditional and Distance Education

In this study, the terms "conventional", "traditional", "regular" "other, and even "normal" when applied to universities or other educational institutions, are used interchangeably to refer to formal classroom-based instruction, where teacher and student are physically present at the same time and in the same place. The differences between conventional and distance systems refer chiefly to students and courses as summarized in a table prepared by Kaye and Rumble, 1981 and included here as Figure 2, pages 28-30. With respect to Athabasca University, some of the features described in the table will be discussed more fully.

In conventional education, the most important locus of management is the classroom and the teachers are key managers (Daniel and Stroud, 1981:151) who can adjust strategies as circumstances require. In distance education institutions, the complexities of planning and implementing various technologies, delivery techniques, control and evaluation necessary to enable thousands of students to study in different places at different schedules, requires a far more bureaucratic structure than is necessary at more conventional universities. As Keegan (1980:19) noted, "In traditional education a teacher teaches. In distance education an institution teaches. This is a radical difference."

As an institution which teaches, a distance education university requires different organization than does the

FIGURE 2: Conventional and Distance-learning Schemes Compared

DIMENSIONS	'CONVENTIONAL SYSTEM'	DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM
1. Students	- relatively homogeneous (age and qualifications) - same location (eg. class rooms) - largely 'dependent' learners - controlled situation	- probably heterogeneous - scattered, at-a-distance - independent learners - relatively uncontrolled
2. Student Records	- do not need to be highly developed nor very detailed	- accurate student records essential (addresses, allocation to tutors, assessment grades, correspondence etc.)
3. Student Support	- automatically built-in to face-to-face system	- need for special provisions of local back-up services to help student with learning problems and to minimize drop-out - ways of bridging the gap between student and central institution need to be designed - distance implies control and response (time) problems to be met
4. Student Assessment and Accreditation	- problems of validity and reliability minimised	- assessment at-a-distance increases problems of validity - use of large numbers of correspondence tutors decreases reliability (need for monitoring procedures)
	- relatively 'cheat-proof'	- cheating/impersonation a potential problem: credibility
5. Media/ Methods	- essentially face-to-face teaching - labour intensive - teaching skills need to be fairly well defined	- essentially 'mediated' teaching - capital intensive - skills needed generally not readily available

Fig. 2 (cont'd)

6. Courses	- relatively simple, few and well defined creation, production and distribution processes - low start-up costs but high student-variable costs: tendency for many options/courses with a few students on each	- more complex, course creation - production - distribution processes, with specialised staff functions arising from divisions of labour - high start up costs but low student-variable costs: tendency for few options with many students per course, to achieve economies of scale (if latter an objective)
7. Organization Administration	- little administrative support required: vast majority of staff in schools and colleges are the teachers - main administrative problems are concerned with time-tabling of teaching periods and with management of teaching staff (personnel functions)	- strong administrative framework needed to link together student support and record functions, course creation functions, course production and distribution functions (industrial and quasi-industrial processes) - some specialist functions may need to be carried out outside the DLS (eg. printing, broadcasting)
8. Control and Regulation	- conventional problems of planning, scheduling, evaluation, leadership, decision-making	- these problems are magnified and in certain cases are qualitatively different (eg. the capital intensive and multi-media nature of the institution imposes longer planning horizons on many more fronts: integration of multi-media creation production - distribution and teaching systems control)

Fig. 2 (cont'd)

9. Cost Structure	- basically labour-intensive, and directly and primarily related to numbers of students; unit costs per student/year do not vary significantly with numbers per course	- basically capital-intensive, and related more to course creation and production costs than to student costs; unit costs per student/year drop significantly with increased numbers per course

Source: Kaye, Anthony, (ed.)"Origins and Structures," Distance Teaching for Higher and Adult Education. London: Croom Helm Ltd. 1981. p. 30.

conventional school or university. Rather, the organization can be termed a "supporting organization" (Holmberg, 1981:97) in which the majority of units or departments are actively involved in producing and distributing courses, facilitating two-way communication, record keeping and assessing student progress. Thus, the distance study organization tends to be more bureaucratic than conventional universities, largely due to the necessity of coordinating activities and the year-round time frame in which these activities occur. For example, Daniel and Stroud (1981) discuss the enormous complexities of administering hundred of courses to thousands of students who are studying at separate places and are at different levels and rates of course completion.

Courses are produced at Athabasca University by a team of specialists which come together from various departments in a matrix management configuration. Ideally, at Athabasca University, the team consists of four members. A subject matter expert, usually a resident academic, is charged with writing or producing materials to internally and externally accepted academic standards. An instructional designer (ID) who is trained in educational psychology, incorporates the principles of adult learning, instructional objectives and a rational approach to student assessment. The visual designer (VD) applies topography, layout and illustrations to enhance learning, while the editor ensures consistency, accuracy and functionality in institutionally produced materials. In later years, the role of ID has been largely restricted to first-time author-academics, and the course team function has become more a linear production than a simultaneous interation.

As Daniel and Stroud (1981:151-152) pointed out, the course team structure of interdependence is both a strength and a weakness in distance education. The strength lies in the combination of expertise which can produce a better result than individuals working separately. The weaknesses are experienced chiefly in three areas. For one, bringing together a group of people with responsibilities toward other groups and reporting lines to other managers results in some level of disruption in terms of priorities and time allocations. Secondly, problems in one area quickly lead to repercussions in another. Indeed, the interrelationship of each unit of the university which relates to student activities create a cumulative effect on over-all institutional health and well-being. And lastly, as Paul (1987:3) points out, the team approach creates some level of frustration to the new academic who must compromise his or her style and content, to some extent, to the group process.

Distance Education in Canada

Athabasca University was, until recently, the only autonomous education facility in Canada. It is distinguished from other universities by having no on-site students and differentiated from other distance education institutions in Canada by the hiring of a full-time faculty rather than the employment of sessional or contractual academic experts.

At least thirty Canadian universities have developed some level of out-reach activities based on "open" access guidelines and/or employ some mode of distance education (Canadian University Distance Education Directory, 1985). Whereas the majority of academics involved in these activities will also have more conventional university relationships and role activities by virtue of their institutions' structures, they will also be somewhat sensitized to the needs of the part time learner and the complexities inherent in the separation of teaching and learning. However, as Potter (1982:186) remarks "most institutions concerned with distance education keep surprisingly little contact with one another". Thus, the growth of distance education in Canada has not been marked by extensive inter-institutional cooperation which may infer that these educators do not necessarily share assumptions about faculty careers, the role of students, the utilization of communications technology and the view of instructional technology.

The post-secondary distance education community in Canada is growing. As Daniel and Stroud (1980:162) note

> The diversifying educational needs of adults, the favourable economics of this form of instruction and the continuing development of communications technology will combine to create an increasingly important role for distance education.

Academics as an Object of Inquiry

Studies of academics in higher education have been increasing steadily over the past few years (Finklestein, 1984; Corcoran and Clark, 1984). These studies tend to focus on faculty in four year colleges which have a similar class-room based format. Considerably less research interest has been shown in the area of faculty cultures and subcultures (Cresswell and Bean, 1981; Caplow and McGee, 1961; Finkelstein, 1984), in faculty in two and three years colleges (Finklestein, 1984) or in faculty in "counterinstitutions" which have innovation as part of their mandate (Spronk, 1987).

With few research models available in the emerging literature on distance education which would focus on the academic as an object of inquiry, other disciplines were examined for possible conceptualizations which could guide the study of role adaptation in a distance education facility. Studies centering on transitions and organizational socialization appeared to offer such a framework for investigating occupational learning which occur as individuals undergo change from newcomer status to acceptance as organizational members. Some precedents might be inferred such works as those of Becker et al. (1961) which examined the processes by which students were socialized into the faculty of medicine, and Van Maanen (1982) who studied the socialization experiences of police recruits.

To take on a new position is to enter a new life-space. Both the studies of "transition" (e.g. Golan, 1981; Nicholson, 1984) and "socialization" (Van Mannen, 1975; Schein, 1968) investigate movement from "what was" to "what is". Transitional work focuses on individual responses to life change, while organizational socialization research is more concerned with organizational effects on molding occupational personalities (e.g. Corcoran and Clark, 1984; Van Maanen, 1982). Transitional changes will be the focus of the next section, followed by discussion of the organizational socialization process.

Transitions

Changes in life patterns are normal, continuous and even necessary in the socially maturing individual (Lake and Lake, 1976). Erickson (1963), for example, describes eight stages of a man's life, the first four of which relate to the childhood years while the remaining four, intimacy, generativity, acceptance and integrity are adult stages. Erickson saw each stage as a psychosocial crises which he described as a turning point characterized by increased vulnerability and heightened potential. Each stage is likely to have an impact on the way individuals behave at work, at play, and at leisure. The pervasiveness of changes to life patterns to the maturing individual is captured by Parkes, 1972 (cited in Hopson and Adams 1976:2) who observed:

> In the ongoing flux of life, man undergoes many changes. Arriving departing growing, declining, achieving, failing -- every change involves a loss and a gain. The old environment must be given up, the new accepted. People come and go; one job is lost, another begun; territory and possessions are acquired or sold; new skills are learned, old abandoned; expectations are fulfilled or hopes dashed -- in all these situations the individual is faced with the need to give up one mode of life and accept another.

As suggested by the above quotation, life changes generally result in some degree of stress or strains as unfolding events require adjustments to established behavioral repertoires. Passages through life stages are called transitions, defined by Hopson and Adams (1976:5) as a "discontinuity in a person's life space", the requirements for which are (i) a personal awareness of the discontinuity and (ii) new behavioral responses to new situations.

One of the first transitional behavioral models was developed by Kubler-Ross (1969) who worked with the terminally ill, to account for the way people deal with their own approaching deaths. Kubler-Ross indicated that efforts to cope with psychological crises follow predictable stages. The first stage involves discovering the news of one's impending death. Secondly, there is a denial stage where individuals typically cannot perceive themselves as mortal or accept that they are dying. Frequently, at this stage people will seek other opinions, search for alternatives, or attempt to continue their lives as though no change had occurred. The next stage is characterized by acceptance, which includes more realistic evaluation of the situation and the generation of some coping strategies. At the fourth level is growth as individuals determine to face the crisis with dignity, frequently deriving psychic benefits in the process.

Hopson and Adams (1976) suggested a similar cyclical model of predictable reactions and feelings to a transitional changes which they formed through content analysis of reports from over 100 people attending transition workshops.

Their first phase is immobilization or the inability to make plans, reason or understand. A second phase is minimization or the attempt to trivialize the disruption. Eventually, as the reality of the change and the resulting stresses become apparent, people begin to be depressed. As reality awareness advances, they begin to accept the reality, a step which marks the beginning of more optimistic responses. Fifthly, individuals start testing themselves in relation to the new situation, often creating stereotypes for behavior. This tends to be a high energy phase which shifts to concern for seeking meanings about how things are different and why they are different. The conceptualizing process allows people to move into the final phase of internalizing these meanings and incorporating them into their behavior.

Both Kubler-Ross (1969) and Hopson and Adams (1976) suggest that people tend to pass through these stages at different rates. Reactions are not personality-dependent as individuals may go through the process differently in response to different change events (Hopson and Adams, 1976). While certain changes can have dramatic effects on the individual, some changes are so incremental, such as aging, that the adjustment gradually occurs without the individual taking much notice (Golan, 1981).

In the occupational setting, Nicholson (1984:172) argues that "work role transitions can have a profound significance for the development of individuals and their organizations." Transitions, depending upon the characteristics of the situation, the individual and the organization, can sustain stability or engender evolutionary or revolutionary changes in personal and social systems. Individuals may adapt to their organizational roles by changing their value and performance orientations and their frame of reference to match role requirements, or by changing role requirements to match their needs, abilities and self-identities (Nicholson, 1984). Thus role transitions may be a source of significant personal and organizational change contributing to the evolution of personal development and organizational cultures.

A factor in work role transitions is identity strain. Individuals who cross particular organizational boundaries attempt to assess themselves in their new role and integrate altered understandings with their view of themselves as workers. The resulting self-identity perceptions may result in the development of coping strategies which effect the way in which work is performed. Hayes and Hough (1976) adapted Levinson's (1961) framework for viewing career adaptations to consider acceptance, ritualism, rebellion, innovation and withdrawal as ways of coping with identity strain in organizations.

Acceptance, according to Hayes and Hough (1976), refers to adjusting to a new self-identity in which there is acceptance of a changed set of assumptions about self. Ritualism is a coping strategy in which individuals detach themselves inwardly from the organization and execute tasks at a minimal level of performance, thus preserving a pre-formed self-identity. Rebellion is also characterized by rejection of organizational norms, but the reaction is manifested by adoption of behaviors that are intended to change the system rather than the self. Innovation is another coping strategy which employs direct action. However, in these instances individuals attempt to attract attention to themselves in order to advance their careers to positions more in keeping with their self-identity. Withdrawal is a total inability to accept the norms of the organization. At this point the option is to leave the organization to find a position more in keeping with the established self-identity.

In the work setting, the organization has a stake in the adaptation of newcomers to the organization. One of the processes by which organizations are maintained over time and circumstance is the recruitment and induction of new members who bring with them appropriate competencies to fill organizational needs. The interaction between an organization and the incoming individual is a process of attempting to achieve a "mutual fit" or a matching of needs so that both benefit. This matching process, or socialization, takes place over the entire professional career as events and individuals undergo change.

Socialization

Socialization is broadly defined by Brim and Wheeler (1963, cited in French, Kast and Rosenzweig, 1985:24) as "the process by which persons acquire the knowledge skills, and dispositions that make them more or less able members of their society". While this definition describes most life experiences where learning and adaptation are required, the organizational experience can be seen as a specific phenomena. Organizational socialization is defined by Van Maanen (1977a:15) as "the manner in which individuals become members and continue as members of an organization -- both from the standpoint of the individual and from the standpoint of others in the organization".

The dual concept of individual and organizational integration is elaborated by Schein (1978) who speaks of the combination of "internal" careers (individual development) and "external" careers (organizational development). Through actual work experiences, individuals develop a self-knowledge and occupational self-concept which, once developed, tends to remain constant throughout the career. This concept which Schein (1978:125) terms "career anchors", has three components

1. Self-perceived talents and abilities (based on actual successes in a variety of work settings);
2. Self-perceived motives and needs (based on opportunities for self-tests and self-diagnosis in

real situations and on feedback from others);

3. Self-perceived attitudes and values (based on actual encounters between self and the norms and values of the employing organization and the work setting).

The career anchors concept emphasizes an interactive dimension among abilities, motives and attitudes which serve to "guide, constrain, stabilize and integrate the person's career" (Schein 1978:127). The resulting orientations have important implications for organizational manpower planning activities.

Membership in the organization involves certain behaviors specific to the requirements of a particular social unit. These behaviors include role expectations and role perceptions. Role expectations are defined by Robbins (1986:175) as "how others believe you should act in a given situation". Role perceptions, according to Robbins (1986:175), are "one's view of how one is supposed to act in a given situation". To some extent, role norms are an expectation to achieve acceptable standards of behavior that are shared by the group's members.

Organizational roles can be described in terms of three functional domains which represent role boundaries. Schein's organizational model (1978:39) indicates that these dimensions are functional (referring to various tasks), hierarchical (referring to the distribution of rank), and inclusionary. Inclusion involves "movement toward the inner circle: or the gaining of trust by older members, achieving access to the "secrets" or special categories of information within an organization and acquiring special responsibilities". Within faculties this inclusionary process culminates in tenure. In the tenure process, peer groups perform defined activities of decision-making which determine a person's worthiness as a participating member in the "real work" or raison d'etre of the faculty.

Faculty members move through socialization processes on two additional dimensions. One is the occupational dimension, defined by Weber (1947:230) as "the mode of specialization, specification and combination of functions of an individual so far as it constitutes the basis of the continual opportunity for profit". The other dimension is entry into the profession itself, which Hughes (1958:33) described as

> entered into by long training ordinarily prescribed by the profession itself and sanctioned by the state. The training provides the necessary science and techniques essential to practise the functions of the profession and carry with it the assimilation of professional attitudes and controls of professional conscience and solidarity.

Thus, the professional occupation is chosen as a means of producing income and the specialization is attained through an extensive period of training in technical and attitudinal responses.

Socialization Processes

Socialization is a process of moving through a series of interrelated but conceptually discrete steps which form a "socialization episode" in a series of such episodes. These steps are termed anticipatory socialization, encounter, adaptation and metamorphosis.

Anticipatory Socialization. Anticipatory socialization is defined by Jablin (1982a:1) as "the process by which individuals form expectations of careers, jobs and organizations prior to entering an organization". Although many models exist of how occupational choices are made, there are two main classes of theories. One may be viewed as the differentialist school. This perspective concentrates on the interaction between individual talents, abilities and psychological endowments with particular occupations. For example, Holland (1962, cited in Neff 1985:116-118) theorized a congruence between person-type and environment-type which he classified as realistic, investigative, social, enterprising or conventional. Incongruence between individual personalities and work climates were likely to lead to maladaptation.

The other view may be termed developmental, which implies that individuals develop through a number of stages in an irregular cyclical process. An example is found in the work of Ginzberg (1951, cited in Neff, 1985:111) who saw the occupational choice process as proceeding through three well-defined periods -- fantasy, tentative and realistic. During the fantasy stage the child thinks about what he would like to be without assessing his own capacities or role opportunities and limitations. Later, the child draws closer to reality in terms of matching his abilities and interests to job opportunities. At this stage, role models such as parents and teachers (Corcoran and Clark, 1984; Jablin, 1982a) may shape emerging occupational patterns.

In the realistic stage, the individual becomes increasingly concerned with the job market and makes those compromises that result in final occupational choice. According to Ginzberg (1951, cited in Neff 1985), as one progresses through the occupational process, choices are not only increasingly restricted but also irreversible.

Edward Hall (1976:37) supports Ginzberg's underlying rationale of irreversibility when he states

> Everything man is and does is modified by learning and is therefore malleable. But once learned, these behavior patterns, these habitual responses, these ways of interacting gradually sink below the surface of the mind and, like the admiral of a submerged submarine fleet, control from the depths.

At the same time, it can be recognized that in modern organizational life, typified by complex, turbulent environments and advancing technology, career patterns are becoming more flexible. Individuals are increasingly pro-active in designing their own careers. Douglas Hall (1976:201) for example, speaks of the "protean career" as a "process which the person, not the organization, is managing". In this "career ethic" the trend appears to be away from advancement along career ladders within particular organizations and toward a life-long sequence of work experiences.

Differentialist, developmentalist and protean views may find common ground in the concept that career choices tend to be consistent with one's self-concept. Super (1953-1979, cited in Neff, 1985:108), a proponent of this position, stated

> a person will make those choices that are maximally consistent with his picture of himself... The vocational self-concept is formulated as a pattern of attitudes, interests and aspirations that passes through many stages of initiation, differentiation and articulation, and is ultimately translated into individual choice.

Anticipatory socialization occurs prior to organizational entry. During this process individuals form expectations of the organization and of themselves filling organizational roles. It is during this period that the unrealistic expectations identified by Wanous (1980) can develop. However, the degree to which realistic and complete occupational and personal potential information was obtained by the recruit may result in individuals forming more accurate expectations (Jablin, 1982b; Louis, 1980; Van Maanen, 1977a).

Encounter. Although an individual's first contact with the organization occurs during the search process, the interview can be seen as the initial encounter between the potential newcomer and the organization. The dilemma of this experience, as seen by Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975:134) is that

> both the organization and the individual have a need to gather accurate information about the other in order to reach a decision. Yet, both feel a need to look attractive to the other; this increases the possibility of biasing the information exchange.

Frequently, when hiring new academics, university committees exhibit a need to present high standards by way of vigorous questioning techniques designed so that the newcomer is expected to perform at a maximal level to set criteria. In addition, the newcomer is required to present his or her expertise to wider university bodies through a series of formal meetings and presentations.

The difficulty with this approach is addressed by Schein (1978:85) who states

> Both (activities) are "future" oriented and are attempting to assess the long range match between the individual and organizational needs and resources, to the point where neither pays enough attention to the immediate short run events which will occur in the early part of the career.

To counteract this problem, Wanous (1980) suggests the "Realistic Job Preview" (RJP) as a method of offering the newcomer complete and accurate information about the organization. Wanous's (1980:23) research indicates that this process has been found

> to reduce voluntary turnover, lower initial expectations, improve the new employee's ability to cope with the job and indirectly convey a message of openness and honesty on the part of the organization.

As well, what might be considered negative aspects of the job should be explored during the encounter stage including unpleasant working conditions (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981), those facets of the job which are "dirty" or unpleasant (Hughes, 1958), organizational attitudes to innovation and accepted career time lines (Schein, 1978).

Generalizations about the RJP effects are considered problematic by other writers (e.g. Louis, 1980; Dugoni and Ilgren, 1981). Dugoni and Ilgren (1981) for instance, maintain that unmet expectations rather than the level of initial expectations lead to voluntary turnover. This approach suggests that dissatisfaction and turnover result from the "broken promise effect". In contrast to both the realism and unmet expectation hypotheses, Louis (1980) proposes that the nature of encounter experiences and the manner in which newcomers cope with these experiences will impact recruit turnover and eventual organizational socialization for those who remain.

Entry. Entry and encounter are terms used somewhat synonymously by some writers to signify the socialization phase of initiation to task, group and role (Feldman, 1976, Van Maanen, 1977b). This phase would involve the period in which individuals experience the actuality of the organization for them, and attempt to become full members. However, these terms can be conceptually separated; encounter referring to the initial interaction between applicant and organization (typified by the employment interview processes), and entry which refers to first experiences on the job as a newcomer to the organization.

Encounter begins with job application and introduction through the employment interview. For successful candidates, this can be viewed as the beginning of the newcomer-organization relationship (Stewart and Cash, 1982). Mutual decisions are then made of acceptability by both the applicant and the organization (Porter et al, 1975). It is frequently the case that in the selection process, anticipatory socialization sharpens the positive features of the organization and dulls the negative features (Van Maanen, 1978:84). This selective perception process may lead to the formation of high expectations as the candidate formulates the circumstances to his or her own needs, requirement and fantasies which are not met in the subsequent employment situation (Wanous, 1980, Louis, 1980).

The actual process of entry into the organization can be viewed as the passage through the organizational boundary from outsider to insider (Schein, 1978). As a result of the employment assessment process, the newcomer has generally met some organizational members and has some familiarity with the physical plant. With the start of a new job, the individual encounters elements that are different in the new situation as compared to the old situation. Louis (1980), for example, spoke of some elements of change which are features of the entry experience. Some changes are knowable in advance and can be accurately anticipated such as new addresses, telephone numbers, title, salary, job description and organizational affiliation. Other element are not, for the most part, knowable in advance. These features are "contrasts" or differences perceived between the present work setting and previous experiences. Contrasts tend to be peculiar to the individual who selects particular features which are for the most part, peculiar to their previous experiences. An example might be in the different processes involved in using a library in the role of student and then in the role of professor.

Louis (1980) referred to another aspect of the contrast phenomenon which she termed "letting go". Letting go requires relinquishing old role and understandings, a process which seems to continue well into the socialization process. Prolonged letting go is due to carrying into the new role memories of the old. Louis likens the process to the event-anniversary phenomenon that occurs when adjusting to the death of a loved one, although, in the socialization process, the experience is less emotionally charged. Thus, the newcomer may evaluate the new role using old role experiences as anchors (Schein, 1978) or resist the new role in favor of the old role.

Adaptation. Once the applicant accepts the position, the complex process of adaptation begins. Adaptation, according to Louis (1980:231), is the process whereby "newcomers become insiders by learning roles and gaining an understanding of the organization's culture".

Available evidence indicates that the very early employment period -- the first year or even the first few months -- is crucial to the development of a healthy individual-organizational relationship (Nadler et al. 1979; Douglas Hall, 1976). For newcomers, entering into a new job means change and change alters situations irreversibly. Van Maanen (1975:113) stresses

> It is a breakpoint in which established relationships are severed and new ones forged, old behavior patterns forgotten and new ones learned, former responsibilities abandoned and new ones taken on.

During the adaptation process individuals attempt to integrate new ideas with old frames of reference -- to develop new "cognitive maps" for assuming organizational roles and for participating as organizational members (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). "Reality shock" is the term that Hughes (1958) used to describe what newcomers often experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. For example, Van Maanen (1977b) describes the concepts of time and space as defined by the organization as being problematical for the newcomer until he is able to construct maps of time and space specific to the new setting.

As cultures differ between organizations and even between roles in the same organization newcomers are required to "learn the ropes" in each role they fill regardless of previous socialization experiences. Louis, (1980:289) and Corcoran and Clark (1984:141) would appear to disagree with this view to some extent when they describe the encounter of the academic and an educational institution as "mediated entry". According to Corcoran and Clark (1984), most incoming faculty have been exposed to teaching and research activities in undergraduate years. In addition, they have had the opportunity of observing faculty roles as played by their professors, learning in the process "what to do" as well as "what not to do".

However, it is difficult to determine from Corcoran and Clark's description whether "mediated entry" is exclusive to the academic profession or even whether previous socialization processes in the academic world eases entry into different contextual educational organizations. For example, universities can differ in mandate, mission, technology and philosophy. These changes may require different processes and role behaviors or different emphasis on such academic components as teaching and research requirements.

In general, however, the adaptation process consists of two general categories of activity -- role acquisition and cultural adaptation.

1. Role Acquisition. French et al. (1985:43) define roles as "the expected behavior patterns for a specific position in a social organization". Katz and Kahn (1978:189) define role behaviors as "the recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a particular outcome". On the formal level, acceptance into the organization is dependent upon individual willingness to accept basic role specifications in the employment contract.

Other than the employment contract, role information comes from at least three other interrelated sources: the supervisor, members of the working group (the role set) and individual personalities.

The supervisor is the individual most likely to interpret the formal parameters of job requirements in operational contexts as the perceived final arbitrator of situational exigencies. Corcoran and Clark (1984:141) found that graduate students tended to hold advisors in high esteem for their professional capacity. Those interaction experiences may lead to initial expectations of parallel relationships with supervisors. However, over time, communications between newcomer and supervisor may become formalized. Newcomers can be particularly sensitive to evaluation by the supervisor who is able to legitimately mediate various organizational outcomes such as tenure review or merit award. On the other hand, the relationship may develop along "mentorship" lines.

Kram and Isabella (1985:111) describe the mentoring relationship as "providing a career-enhanced function such as sponsorship, coaching, facilitating exposure and visibility, and offering challenging work or protection". Mentoring, it should be noted, is not the exclusive prerogative of supervisors but may exist in peer relationships as well. These relationships can have powerful impact on norms and values which the newcomer ultimately accepts (Roethlesberger and Dickson, 1970; Whyte 1955).

Although new faculty members have already experienced an elaborate socialization process during the years of training, new circumstances demand new learning of "how things are done around here" (Louis 1980:231). Viewing the role of the group in organizational socialization, Van Maanen and Schein (1979:211) state "new members must be taught to see the organizational work as do their more experienced colleagues if the traditions of the organization are to survive." Moreover, each organization has a "timetable" for the appropriate socialization to occur. Glaser and Strauss (1971, cited in Van Maanen, 1975:116) have noted "there is a rate of passage through organizational boundaries. . . which have a 'sentimental order' about 'when things should happen'."

The entire group of people with whom the newcomer must interact in the performance of his or her role is termed the "role set". Katz and Kahn (1978:190) describe the activities of role-senders as "role expectations for a given office (and its occupant) that exists in the minds of members of its role set and represent standards in terms of which they evaluate the occupant's performance." Role expectations are communicated to newcomers in a variety of symbolic ways by the group. It is then incumbent upon the individual to "make sense" of these communications and adapt them to his or her own cognitive framework.

Adaptation choices range between holistic conformity to group norms and expectations with the attendant satisfactions, or maintaining independence and autonomy. In this regard, Turner (1966:151) claimed "the individual will adapt to the role by identifying with the role of another, or he may retain a clear separation of identity of self-attitudes and the attitudes of others."

New incumbents to organizational roles bring sets of attributes, abilities, beliefs and values already formed about their physical and social environments. These factors guide the individual in coping with unpredictable situations and provide cognitive maps for "making sense" of ambiguous or alien circumstances. In this context, Louis (1980:237) speaks of "surprise" as "the difference between an individual's assumptions and subsequent experiences in the new setting."

Louis (1980:237) lists several forms of surprise which require adaptation on the part of the newcomer. First, conscious expectations about the job are not fulfilled in early job experiences. Second, expectations about oneself are not met. Third, features of the job were not anticipated. Fourth, inaccurate forecasting of internal reactions to new experiences causes confusion. Fifth, cultural assumptions brought from previous settings fail as operating guides in the new setting. Sixth, both overmet and undermet expectations may be sources of surprise; in addition, these surprises may be of a pleasant or unpleasant nature. Thus, newcomer entry experiences can be expected to consist of changes, contrasts and surprises which must be coped with if the transition to membership is to be accomplished.

Adaptations are also required along attitudinal dimensions. Schein (1984:182) indicates that "any given individual can be thought of as a more or less integrated set of social selves organized around a basic image or concept of self." These constructed social selves (Mead, 1962) tend to be constructed in somewhat different ways according to different situations and roles. In the organizational setting individuals may be confronted by ambiguous situations which require adaptations to particular circumstances which are consistent with basic underlying character structures. Graen (1976:1208) suggests such ambiguities may be encountered in assessing individual orientations between such dichotomies as "(a) rational and irrational, (b) conformity and independence, (c) ethical and unethical, and (d) healthy and sick." Within these categories the individual attempts to integrate his or her organizational role and his or her personal belief systems. As newcomers "normalize" their positions within the range of acceptable behaviors, they tend to imprint personal identities upon the work group. Eventually, the individuals are able to participate personally through their own efforts. Van Maanen (1977b:36), terms this process "ownership" which "refers to the individual's control over his own fate -- whether it be real or imagined." Schein (1984:176) prefers the term "innovation" meaning "the influence of the individual on the organization" as more indicative of the relationship between the individual and the organization.

2. Cultural Adaptation. Culture, according to Spradley and McCurdy (1975:4-5) is the single most important concept in anthropology. Although many definitions of cultural anthropology exist, the Spradley and McCurdy definition seems most appropriate in that it chooses to emphasize the cognitive dimension of experience. It states "culture is the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate social behavior".

Long a concern of anthropologists, the concept of "culture" has only recently become a focus of research in organizations. Meyer and Rowan (1983) explained organizational structure and legitimacy in terms of myths. Weick (1979) pointed out the symbolic significance of organizational behaviors. Trice and Beyer (1984) discussed the relation of rites and ceremonials to networks of interactive meanings. Gioia and Poole (1984) explored the concept of "script" as a series of metaphorical activities which enable organizational members to understand expected behaviors. Neff (1985) describes the role of language which can be so specialized to insider use that it is virtually unintelligible to outsiders. Goffman (1956) analyzed the nature of demeanor and diffidence as guides of conduct between formal and informal rules.

Eldridge and Crombie (1974:89) define "organizational culture" as refering to

> the unique configuration of norms, values, beliefs, ways of behaving and so on that characterize the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done.

This view of "how things get done around here" is echoed by others such as Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Schein, (1985) who suggest that culture, in the organizational context, can be thought of as a system of values and informal rules developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems and is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. This definition adds the notion of culture as a system passed down, or taught, from one generation of employees to another.

Organizational culture then, can be thought of as a shared system of meaning accrued from historical events which provide stability in the organization. But culture can also be thought of in a less static manner as emergent in that cultural norms, beliefs and values, while providing the basis of behavior appropriate to a particular group are nevertheless interpreted and negotiated through the on-going evolvement of the organization. Over time, new or alternative meanings develop which are also shared and at the same time continually renegotiated among the membership. This more dynamic view of is captured by Louis (1985:44) who observes "meaning is essentially and endlessly negotiated by social system members".

Thus, basic components of organizational cultures are shared meanings, relevant and distinctive to a group, which are passed on to newcomers and new meanings or interpretations are added as the group develops. Further, there are at least four basic assumptions which may be important in interpreting the nature of organizational culture. One is that enculturation into a particular organizational society or group is ultimately a choice of the individual (Eldridge and Crombie, 1974). Should the employee become disillusioned or discover that aspects of the organization are not congruent with his or her values, attitudes or beliefs, withdrawal or deviant behavior are possible coping mechanisms (Graen, 1976; Raelin,1983). In

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this respect, participation in the organization is not all-inclusive of the individual's existence, but is experienced as a subset of a larger societal experience wherein many roles are performed outside of the organization; the whole of the experiences create the totality of cultural understandings.

The second assumption leads from the notion of the organizational culture as a subset of a larger society. Organizational culture is embedded in, rather than separate from the larger societal culture. Macro dimensions of the supra-society must be determined before any level of analysis can be undertaken, as most cultures are subsystems of other cultures. For the purposes of this paper, the educational system describes the supra-culture, Athabasca University the macro-culture, and the Faculty of Athabasca University the sub-culture. Other networks and groups which form either permanently or on an ad hoc basis within the faculty group constitutes sub-sets of the sub-culture.

Subcultures are defined by Van Maanen and Barley (1985:38) as

> a subset of organizational members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all, and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group.

These smaller groupings can be visualized as akin to Venn diagrams, with circles overlapping as the collective understandings of one group approximate those of another. Each "circle" of culture exerts influences upon and is influenced by other "circles", the whole being dependent upon the parts and the parts subsisting within the whole.

Thirdly, as Louis (1985) notes there is a tacit characteristic to the meanings as shared by the membership. The nature of culture is elusive. For example, Warren Bennis (1976:165) describes a "culture" of work in which

> the elements are hard to discern, impossible to touch, but so terribly important in their impact on the ways people act; that is, the set of values which guide their decision-making behavior.

Van Maanen and Schein (1979:210) expand on Bennis's ideas stating

> cultural forms are so rooted in the recurrent problems and common experiences of the membership in an organizational segment that once learned they become viewed by insiders as perfectly "natural" responses to the world of work they inhabit.

A final cultural assumption is also drawn from Louis (1985); that is that culture, to a significant extent, is discovered at the individual level of interpretation. For example, the culture may be presented from the viewpoint of the Dean, but a different interpretation may be forthcoming from a faculty member. Moreover, the transmission of culture, as is true of any other communication, is not accomplished with absolute fidelity from the understandings of the sender, through the noise of the channel, to the understanding of the receiver. As Louis (1985:42) observes, "Here the persons idiosyncratic adaptation of cultural codes leads to a set of personal codes of relevance".

While culture is often referred to as the "glue' which holds organizations together (Smith and Simmons, 1983), it may also be thought of as the "oil" which lubricates the machinery of production (Moore, 1985). Intersubjectively negotiated meaning suggests a predictability of language, processes and value-driven behaviors which facilitate and support the individual in performing tasks. Once you learn how the job is to be done, then you can get on with it. Thus, familiarity with the organizational culture may ideally free participants to apply their own creativity in extending and enriching the cultural entity.

Broad cultural learnings begin virtually from the moment of birth and continue through increasingly specific and intricate discriminations throughout life. Both verbal and non-verbal communications form conduits for influencing and reactive monitoring. Lewis (1972:4) points out that "verbal instructions can mold subliminal noticing or ignoring", while "subtle human-~~to-human~~ signaling can occur without ever using the medium of speech."

Through these actions and interactions, meanings are formed over time. Although many of the activities involved in the learning process are forgotten or relegated to the unconscious level, the behaviors they engender become as "second nature". Cultural forms may not carry precisely the same meanings for all members of a community, however, generally accepted definitions are strong (Keesing, 1981). Moreover, general cultural norms beliefs and values are so deeply engrained in the membership that any real or perceived deviance draws a range of sanctions from the group which recognizes the violation (White, 1976).

Both Wanous et al. (1984) and Weick (1979) invoke social learning as a method of viewing the socialization of culture as a continuous, reciprocal interaction among cognitive, behavioral and environmental factors. Social learning theory holds that observation of social models allows vicarious learnings of complex patterns of behavior without having to go through a long series of trial and error experiences. As well, the capacity of people to use symbols provides powerful ways to process and code environmental stimuli while self-regulation of behavior allows individuals to take a pro-active role in interacting with external influences. Not only must the newcomer acquire understandings of the general organizational culture, but he or she is also faced with the task of assimilating pivotal values, missions and interpretive schemes of the various sub-cultures to which he or she belongs or relates to.

Metamorphosis

Initial socialization processes may result in successful adaptation or role failure depending on individual cognitions, motivations and behavior. Role continuation is defined by Corcoran and Clark (1984:135) as "metamorphosis" characterized by "internalized role specifications, a sense of satisfaction with work, and a high degree of job motivation and commitment."

Kelman (1977:189-190) hypothesizes that the integration of change with one's value systems consist of three distinct processes of social influence. Compliance occurs when an individual accepts influence from another person or from a group because he hopes to achieve a favorable reaction from them. Identification occurs when an individual adopts behavior derived from another person or group because this behavior is associated with a satisfying self-defining relationship to this person or group. Finally, internalization occurs when an individual accepts influence because the induced behavior is congruent with his value systems. In contrast, Schein (1983b:183) views the individual as more discriminating in his acceptance of social influences. Schein (1983b) differentiates between an individual's perception of pivotal norms (essential attributes of the role), relevant norms (desirable and relevant, though not necessary attributes) and peripheral norms (attributes basically irrelevant to the specific role). The pivotal, relevant and peripheral attributes of a role selected by the newcomer will define in some degree the filters which operate in eventual commitment to and acceptance in the organization.

At the metamorphosis stage, a social exchange process (Etzioni, 1970) can be said to occur in which the individual has determined the amount of freedom to be given up and the degree of compliance which will be given to legitimate organizational demands. The organization, in turn, has determined the amount and direction of direct intervention it will make in the shaping of individual's behavior to match its needs.

According to Schein (1978:121) this "mutual acceptance" is the first ratification of the "psychological contract" which is described as

> an implicit, psychologically ambiguous, but nonetheless real, set of strong expectations that both the employee and the boss (and the work group) have over each other after some period of "learning" or "socialization" has passed.

The psychological contract is typically an ongoing process of negotiation and renegotiation between employer and employee. However, Schein (1978:120) stresses

> much of the process remains implicit and rests on assumptions about the future, the degree of credibility about what is overtly said, and the actual events that transpire as the career unfolds.

To a considerable degree, the nature of the psychological contract is likely to be a measure of internalized commitment on the part of the individual and organizational acceptance of the individual.

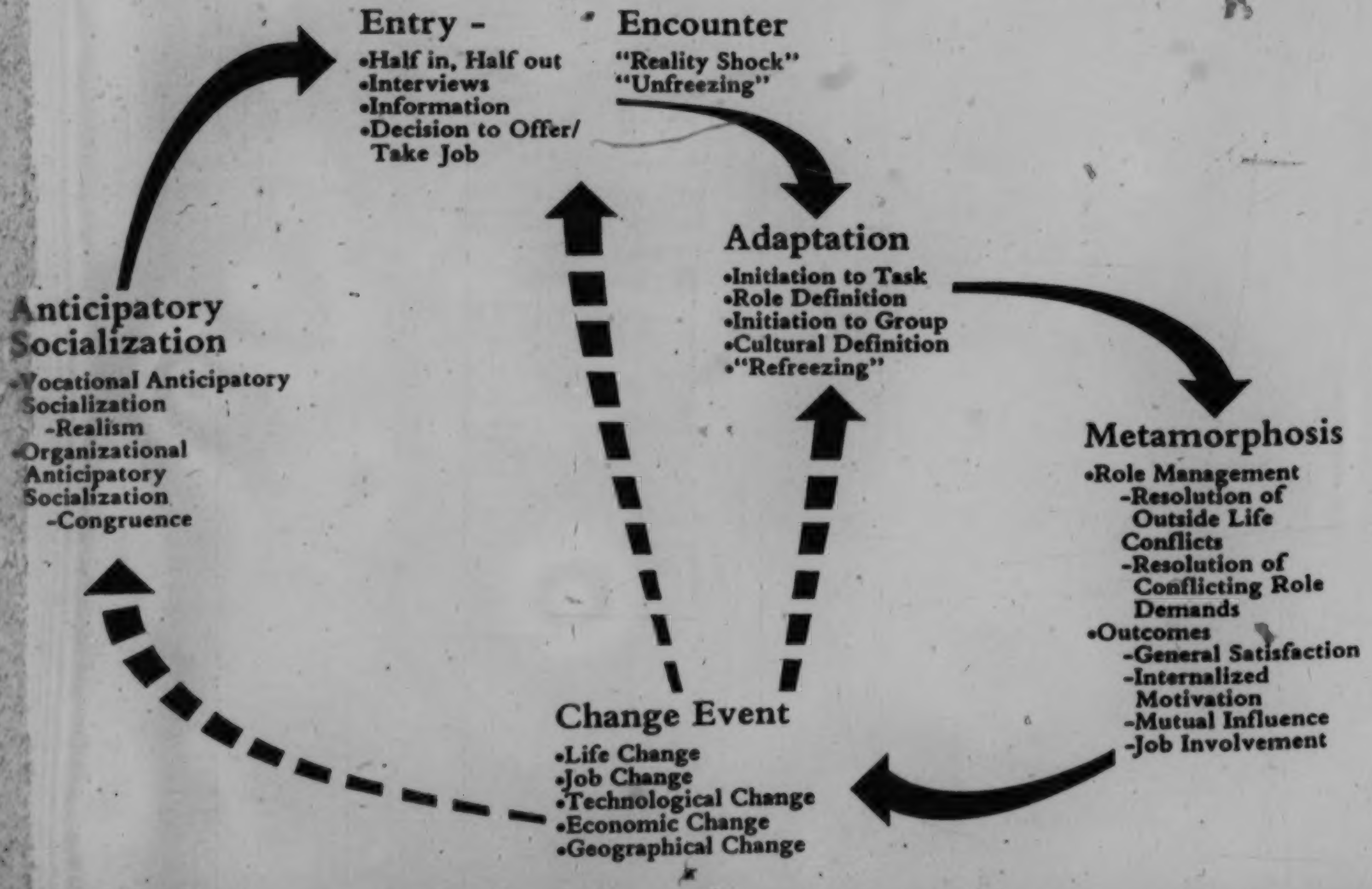
Summary

For the faculty member, socialization is likely to occur at two levels, -- socialization into the profession and socialization into the post secondary work place. In the socialization which occurs during professional school, students learn from both faculty and peers and socialization is both formal and informal (Becker et al., 1961; Corcoran and Clark, 1984; Mortimer and Simmons, 1978). Students learn the role of student as well as of practicing professional (Hall, 1986).

In the work place itself, socialization has frequently been viewed as an analysis of stages (see Figure 3, page 69). The first stage, anticipatory socialization is characterized by the search for vocation (Neff, 1985) followed by the formation of expectations about employing organizations (Feldman, 1976).

FIGURE 4

MODEL OF SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES


Anticipatory Socialization
•Vocational Anticipatory Socialization
-Realism
•Organizational Anticipatory Socialization
-Congruence
Entry -
•Half in, Half out
•Interviews
•Information
•Decision to Offer/ Take Job
Encounter
"Reality Shock"
"Unfreezing"
Adaptation
•Initiation to Task
•Role Definition
•Initiation to Group
•Cultural Definition
•"Refreezing"
Metamorphosis
•Role Management
-Resolution of Outside Life Conflicts
-Resolution of Conflicting Role Demands
•Outcomes
-General Satisfaction
-Internalized Motivation
-Mutual Influence
-Job Involvement
Change Event
•Life Change
•Job Change
•Technological Change
•Economic Change
•Geographical Change

The second stage, entry-encounter, involves obtaining information about the organization through interviews and other sources (Wanous, 1980). Encounter is the process of confronting expectations once hired into the work place, managing outside-life conflicts and making sense of the changed life situation (Louis, 1980). At this stage the individual can be viewed as being half in and half out of the organization, as final decisions are still to be made and the situation remains somewhat amorphous or "unfrozen".

Adaptation, the third stage, is focused on the initiation to task, learning one's role within the work group and acquiring cultural values which define the organization (Van Maanen, 1975).

As the individual "refreezes" into a new role mode, he or she integrates role and outside-life conflicts to achieve a level of satisfaction, job involvement and internalized motivation (Porter et al., 1975) which remains more or less constant until an occupational, organizational or life change occurs. Such change initiates a recycling through some or all of the stages (Schein, 1978; Nicholson, 1984).

Failure to adapt to the new role or culture is thought to result in absenteeism or turnover (Dugoni and Ilgren, 1981) or rebellion (Schein 1968).

Chapter 3:

METHODOLOGY

Choice of Study Method

In choosing the methodology appropriate for a particular study, the researcher is faced with the dilemma posed by Aram (1976:1)

> A behavioral scientist, seeking to learn about human behavior, may study a single individual or may focus on a large number of persons. The first approach promises greater knowledge of the complexity of the human being but foregoes the opportunity to generalize across many people. The second approach affords greater generalization but misses the opportunity to know each individual in depth.

The method of research chosen will reflect the kind of information needed to answer the question the research proposes. According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), two major theoretical perspectives often guide the choice of methodology. One perspective, positivism, is described by Bogdan and Taylor (1975:2) as seeking the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals. Typically, the researcher approaches the experiment through study of background materials, definition of variables, setting of hypotheses and describing in advance the experimental design and the causal order expected between variables. In the positivistic mode, the scientist is primarily concerned with systematic and controlled processes which ideally result in predictive theory.

The other main perspective is a phenomenological orientation approached through qualitative or naturalistic methodology. Qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher enters the field where the phenomena occur. Guba (1978, cited in Patton, 1984:42) defines naturalistic inquiry as "a discovery oriented approach which minimizes investigator manipulation of the study setting and places no prior constraints on what the outcomes of the research will be".

Burrell and Morgan (1979) discuss the positivist-phenomenological perspectives as functional and interpretive paradigms respectively. The functionalist paradigm, which has its roots in the mechanistic view of man and organizations, approaches its subject matter from an objectivist point of view. This standpoint tends to provide essentially rational explanations of social affairs.

The interpretive paradigm is subjectivist in nature. Interpretive assumptions are, according to Morgan, (1980:608) "that what passes as social reality does not exist in any concrete sense, but is the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals".

While both paradigms operate on a regulation dimension (attempts to provide explanations of society in terms which emphasize its underlying unity and cohesiveness), another dimension, that of radical change exists (Burrell and

Morgan, 1979). Within the radical change dimension the organizational paradigms are radical humanism (anti-organization theory) and radical structuralism, both of which are predicated upon a view of society as a potentially dominating force (Morgan, 1980). Morgan (1980:612-614) goes on to indicate that no one metaphor captures the entire nature of the organization but that viewing organizations on the basis of new metaphors makes it possible to understand them in new ways.

The phenonmenalogical-interpretive paradigm, approached through qualitative research, is largely derived from the ethnographic research tradition of anthropology. For anthropologists, the object of inquiry is frequently cultural description, or what Garfinkel (1967:57) terms "the world known in common and taken for granted." The task of the ethnographer, as stated by Bogdan and Taylor (1975:16), is "to examine the ways people apply abstract rules and commonplace understandings in situations in order to make actions appear routine, explicable and unambiguous." Through direct personal contact and observation the researcher attempts to understand the world as it is experienced by participants, rather than how that world conforms to a priori assumptions. Ethnographic approaches result in "rich" or "thick" descriptions of the phenomena being investigated.

Bogden and Biklen (1982:27-30) usefully capsulize the qualitative mode as having the following characteristics

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with processes rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

An additional distinction between positivistic and phenomenological research is the nature of research goals. In the positivistic mode a rigorous methodological program, consisting of formally rational procedures, controlled by logic and empirical fact, results in "truth" about the laws of nature (Johnson, 1975). From the phenomenological perspective, the goal is to describe systematically the characteristics of variables and to define categories which account for social activity in everyday situations. As Burrell and Morgan (1979:247) state

> It is concerned with learning about the ways in which people order and make sense of their everyday activities and the way they make them 'accountable' to others in the sense . . . of the way in which actors make evident and persuade each other that the events and activities in which they are involved are coherent and consistent.

Many findings from positivistic research are intended to generalize to wider population. Phenomenological research does not have access to the same "scientific methodology" which affects the concept of generalizability. Rather, LeCompte and Goetz (1982:34) suggest, comparability and translatability are important concepts in establishing validity in ethnographic research. Comparability requires that the ethnographer delineate the group or construct characteristics so clearly that they can serve as a basis for comparison with other like or unlike groups. Translatability assumes that methods, characteristics and phenomena are identified so explicitly that confident comparisons can be conducted. However, LeCompte and Goetz (1982:55) warn "attaining absolute validity and reliability is an impossible goal for any research model . . . and these dilemmas are shared across social science research designs." Nevertheless, investigators who attempt an analytical description of a cultural scene should use a variety of strategies to reduce threats to reliability and validity.

Given that the purpose of the study is to examine the processes by which professional academics experience different role behaviors in an alternative cultural setting, a flexible approach such as offered in the ethnographic mode seems appropriate. Allport (cited in Sellitz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook, 1967:236) captured the essence of the issue when they stated

> If we want to know how people feel: what they experience and what they remember, what their emotions and motives are like, and the reasons they act as they do -- why not ask them?

Methodologically an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to use the culture of the setting and personal accounts of population members to account for socially acquired learning. Thus, the ethnographic or qualitative method of research was considered appropriate for this study, and its tenets guided the subsequent research activity.

Data Gathering

A multi-method approach was used in gathering data for this research project. Unstructured in-depth interviews initiated data collection, followed by a general guideline approach in a subsequent round of interviews. The outline of topics chosen for the second interviews was suggested in an initial review of the data which suggested emerging categories. After further analysis, some respondents were asked to respond to direct questions to elicit more specific information. Interview information from key informants was supplemented with interviews with other organizational members on topic-specific matters, and referral to documents. The approach to data gathering and the methodology employed will be discussed in the following section.

Interviewing

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975:5), unstructured interviewing is one of the mainstays of the qualitative method. Through conversation and discussion the ethnomethodologist hopes to understand "the properties of the scene observed; the people there, their understandings, and their activities" (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:118).

Interviews can be regarded as a useful method of reconstructing events, activities, feelings, motivations, concerns and experiences which have already occurred in individual lives (Lincoln and Guba,1985). The interview, which Back and Gergen (cited in Dexter 1970:136) regard as a "conversation with a purpose", allows the researcher to explore the interviewee's meanings as well as the framework which structures those meanings. Gordon (1980:61-62) proposes several advantages to the interview

1. The interview provides more opportunity to motivate the respondent to supply accurate and complete information.
2. The interview provides more opportunity to guide the respondent in his interpretation of the questions.
3. The interview allows greater flexibility in questioning the respondent.
4. The interview allows greater control over the interview situation.
5. The interview provides a greater opportunity to evaluate the validity of the information by observing the respondent's non-verbal manifestations.

Another advantage of the interview technique which might be added to this list is that the interview format need not consist of a single transaction. A series of both formal and informal interchanges may occur in which information can be clarified, expanded or reconciled as seems suitable to both interviewee and interviewer.

As in any methodology, the interview has its drawbacks. The process can be time consuming for the interviewee, the interviewer and perhaps the organization in which the investigation occurs. Different questions may elicit different responses leading to a confusion of emerging patterns. Interviewer skills in developing rapport and interacting easily with respondents while collecting systematic information may be problematical. Respondents may more or less deliberately skew their proffered information. In addition, the opportunity for interviewer effects which might guide responses, bias listening and warp the process is a threat to the validity of the findings.

However, the interview provides a valuable research procedure to produce descriptive data of the subjective nature of human behavior. People reveal in their own words parts of their lives which otherwise would be unobservable. In order to make sense of the reports, the researcher makes the assumption that individual perspectives are meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. To ensure effective interview procedures, the interviewer monitors her own performance and supplements her skills with frequent review of such practitioners in the field as Gordon (1980), Fear (1978), Patton (1984), Dexter (1970), Rogers (1967) and Measor (1985).

As the research problem aims at examining the recollected experiences and responses of academics in an alternative setting, it is important that the initial interview situation allow the respondent to structure the account. Dexter (1970:5) notes that "the investigator is willing and often eager to let the interviewee teach him what the problem, the question, the situation is". This view would seem to be consistent with Glasser and Strauss' (1967:23) conception of the generation of "conceptual categories or their properties from the evidence".

The unstructured approach has particular advantages in initial interviews, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1982:136), who suggest that at the beginning of a project "it may be important to get a general understanding of a range of perspectives on a topic" which then can become more focussed in subsequent interviews as data on particular topics emerge. Approaches to collecting data through interviews range along a continuum from the informal conversational interview to the highly structured interview, each becoming more specific in sequential formats.

Unstructured exploratory interviews are generally followed by interviews which employ "the general interview guide approach". According to Patton (1984:198) an "interview guide" serves as a basic checklist to make sure all relevant topics are covered although the actual ordering and wording of questions to elicit responses to issues are not determined in advance". As well the interviewees are invited to expand, elucidate or elaborate on previous reports providing further focus and direction to the information exchange in subsequent interviews.

Documents

Verbal permission from the Director of Personnel, Athabasca University, was given for access to files which are not of a confidential nature for the purposes of this study. Other formal documents are available in the Athabasca University Library and Archives, public copies of meetings and operational manuals.

Formal documents can be thought of as "public archives", defined by Webb et al. (1966:53) as "the on-going continuing records of a society and a potential source of varied scientific data". Bogden and Biklen (1982:100) add

> Such documents are regarded by researchers as extremely suggestive, representing the biases of promoters and, when written for external consumption, presenting an unrealistically glowing picture of the organization. ..It is precisely for these properties (and others) that qualitative researchers look upon them favorably.

As supplementary information, a survey of available documents affords both a cross-check on the validity of information and a basis for comparing official and unofficial communications where appropriate.

In a field study, a researcher may have access to personal written documents which would further supplement interview and official document data. Personal documents are defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982: 97) as "any first person narrative produced by the individual which describes his or her own actions, experiences or beliefs". Sellitz et al. (1967:323) indicate that items which meet the following criteria may be considered personal documents. They are

1. written documents
2. documents that have been produced on the writer's own initiative
3. documents that focus on their author's personal experience

Through obtaining access to personal documents the researcher has the opportunity to view an additional aspect of the individual's approach to the production, accumulation and preservation of data they perceive as important. As Sellitz et al. (1967:324) point out, "they permit us to see other people as they see themselves".

Observational Data

A third source of data is observations made throughout the research period of such non-verbal cues as artifacts, spatial arrangements, gestures, postures, action, inflections, and the like. These cues are referred to as non-verbal communication. The value to the qualitative researcher, according to Gordon (1980:314), is that

> non-verbal communication tends to be non-rational in that the response is direct and immediate circumventing the conscious-deliberative process. Non-verbal messages tend to follow a simultaneous response pattern we commonly call thinking. For these reasons non-verbal communication is less conscious than verbal communication, but it may be the more powerful force in face-to-face interaction, particularly as a determinant of motivation.

Official documents, personal documents and observations of non-verbal behavior are forms of "unobstrusive measures", described by Webb et al. (1966:119) as having the advantage of the researcher not being readily observed by the respondent. Webb and Weick (1983:221) provide an illustration of unobtrusive measures in their discussion of control

> the potential presence of control ... can meaningfully range across items as diverse as dress, wall trappings, names, departments through which interdepartmental mail envelopes have previously circulated, sports preferences, format of daily calendar, jewelry, formality of telephone greeting, etc. These measures, all of which are obvious, tend to be overlooked in favor of what people say about the control they exert and receive. Since that talk may itself be controlled in such a way that crucial phenomena are selectively inattended and/or represented in innocuous images, cross-checking by other less influencable measures is especially crucial.

The use of these sources in combination with in-depth interviews provide a multi-method approach to data collection.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data cannot easily be separated from qualitative measurement. Qualitative research into social processes typically begins with some pragmatic methodology and substance of inquiry. As the research develops, both the methodology and the theoretical perspectives may be refined, adapted, or substantially changed according to the perceived usefulness as it emerges through the inquiry process. The risks, according to Schatzman and Strauss (1973:viii), are that during this time the researcher "can expect to learn much about theory, about research and about himself as a researcher".

As the particular circumstances of the project were relatively unknown in advance, stated formulations were considered premature. Rather, as described by Guba (1978, cited in Patton (1984:46) "the practise of naturalistic inquiry is a wave on which the investigator moves from varying degrees of a discovery mode to varying emphasis on a verification mode in attempting to describe the real world". What is discovered is verified by returning to the empirical world under study to examine the extent to which the emergent analysis fits. Glaser and Strauss (1967:2) call this process "the discovery of grounded theory" which they define as "theory generated or discovered from data systematically obtained from social research".

Methodological Issues

Researchers typically aim to collect data that is both valid and reliable. As Gordon (1980:39) observes

> Method becomes scientific method when evidences of unreliability and invalidity are actively sought to discover their sources and to develop strategies, techniques and tactics to minimize the effects of bias.

Due to the inherent differences between qualitative field-based study and scientific experimental-based inquiry, some "reinterpretations" of validity and reliability are required by the naturalistic researcher. Guba and Lincoln (1981:104) suggest the terms "credibility, applicability, auditability and confirmability" as analogies for rigor within the naturalistic paradigm. As these criteria will guide the proposed study, a brief description of these terms and their applicability follows.

Credibility

The concept of credibility is not qualitatively different from the scientific notion of internal validity grounded in more traditional procedures. The data must be seen to be "demonstrably empirical and empirically and logically related to the propositions stated" (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:133).

By the very act of examination and observation a phenomena undergoes some alteration. This is particularly so when the instrument of measurement is the single researcher and the objects of measurement are other individuals -- all of whom are susceptible to conscious and unconscious distortions, fallibilities and preconceptions. These tendencies, Guba and Lincoln (1981:105-106) maintain, can be offset by prolonged engagement on the site, researcher sensitivity to bias and cross-checking of data.

One form of cross-checking is to test researcher perceptions against those of participants. This can be accomplished by sharing parts or all of the field notes with participants to allow opportunities for acceptance, elaboration and clarification. Emerging categories can also be checked with participants for corroboration and consistency.

Another validation check can be made through consultation with a knowledgeable, disinterested reviewer. This reviewer checks the evidence to determine "if the story holds up, the pieces fit, it makes sense, the facts are consistent" (Eisner, in Guba and Lincoln, 1981:106).

Applicability

Guba and Lincoln (1981:118) counsel that the concept of "generalizability" should be replaced by the idea of "fittingness". In dealing systematically with social process theory(s) emerge which fit the data. From the thick description of the culturally embedded events and experiences a scheme should be devised which systematically sorts the information into categories. Miles and Huberman (1984:60) suggest that materials be coded according to clear operational definitions, but that the researcher be aware that codes will change and develop as the field experience develops. Since codes drive the retrieval and organization of the data analysis, meanings should be as precise as possible both for use by the single researcher at one time or multiple researchers over time.

Glaser and Strauss (1967:228) indicate that a related problem in applicability is

> to describe the data of the social world so vividly that the reader, like the researcher, can almost literally see and hear its people -- but always in relation to the theory.

Methods of presentation suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) include direct quotes and telling phrases from interviews, dramatic segments from field notes, background description, descriptions of space and circumstance and narrative.

Guba and Lincoln (1981:120) sum up the issues of credibility and applicability when they state "it is impossible to have internal validity without reliability, a demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability".

Consistency

The concept of consistency is interrelated with the other criteria of credibility and applicability. As the time and circumstance of a naturalistic inquiry can never be precisely replicated, the demonstration of consistency is an important consideration. Triangulation, or the use of multi-methods of data collection, is one important guide to maintain standards of consistency; another is the audit trail.

The audit trail is the researcher's description of working procedures employed or developed during the project, which can subsequently be followed by other researchers conducting a secondary analysis. An on-going journal of observations, emerging categories and their rationale, options, changes, and the like, assist the researcher in illustrating the decision making processes which guide the development of the research project.

Neutrality

Guba and Lincoln (1981:124) use the term "neutrality" as a redefinition of "objectivity" as used in the scientific paradigm. The techniques suggested to meet confirmability requirements suggest that the information collected can be certifiable by other analysts and thus considered neutral.

A related issued in the proposed study is that I am an inside member of the organization in which the research will take place. Thus, I may be considered by some to be a biased or subjective investigator. Van Maanen (1983: 17-18) suggests that insider knowledge blocks translation of language for public or scholarly consumption, tends to cast events in general and romantic description, disregards multiple sources of information, and results in a plethora of information that can turn out to be wrong.

However, the outsider perspective, according to Van Maanen (1983:17-18) also has drawbacks. The outsider may overlook the meaning of the users of language systems, disassociate data with the actions studied and produce artificial or distant description thus providing less information.

Although Van Maanen's list cannot be considered exhaustive of controversies surrounding the insider-outsider issue, it gives some idea of the complexities involved. At best, as a researcher, I am ethically bound to confront my biases as well as my effects on the data obtained as clearly and conscientiously as possible. The audit journal helped to provide a vehicle for this self-examination.

Ultimately, it is the consistency and applicability of the data which count. As Guba and Lincoln (1982:127) point out

> Naturalistic methods are no worse than scientific in achieving neutrality, and at times may even be better. Whatever degree of apparent objectivity may be lost is more than compensated for by the continuously emerging insights that naturalistic methods produce.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethical considerations were of particular concern given my position as a senior staff member and the interviewee's position as relative newcomers to the organization. Not only may relative positions within the organization affect data exchange, but ethical concerns including individual rights, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity may also be involved. Therefore, several ethical guidelines were followed in this study.

First, the proposal for this study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Alberta. Second, the appropriate executive officers of Athabasca University were fully informed of the nature and the purpose of the study as well as of confidential and ethical considerations. Third, participants were informed of the nature and purpose of the study. Consent was verbally given on tape by the interviewees, and additional checks were made in follow-up interviews. Respondents were informed of their right to limit comment if they choose.

Fourth, both the executive officers and the participants were informed of the researcher's undertaking to abstain from participating in any decision-making groups which have a direct impact on the participant's career (e.g. promotion boards and tenure committees) either at this time or in the future. Fourth, names and identifying characteristics were changed as much as possible for reporting purposes.

Sixth, every effort was made in reporting results to ensure the anonymity of participants. As it is impossible to ensure complete anonymity, participants were made aware of the risks and consulted concerning the use of direct quotations and other information which may disclose identity. Seventh, findings were reported by developing themes or categories rather than by means of life-histories or case studies.

The Method of This Study

Interviews

Permission was sought from a senior executive officer to interview Athabasca University staff members for the purpose of the study. During the introductory meeting, the Officer was given an oral outline and explanation of the study and how it would be conducted. Issues of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were discussed. It was agreed that I would be exempted from decision making bodies which may effect the career determinations of key informants, and that my refusal at the time of appointment to such a body would be sufficient indication that membership would not be desirable in view of ethical implications. Additionally, there was a detailed discussion concerning the source, type and nature of documents which might be investigated during the study. This interview was followed up with a memo outlining the conversation, and a return memo agreed to the study as stipulated.

Five academic staff members who had recently received continuing appointments were personally contacted and asked to participate in the study as key informants. All five initially agreed, but one later asked to withdraw due to dead-line pressures. Examination of appointment records indicated that two other staff members had received tenure at virtually the same time six months before. As no criteria for key informant inclusion existed beyond recent tenure conferral, I included both faculty members and increased the key respondent group to six.

Most interviews were conducted on the interviewee's home turf, their offices. Others were conducted at the Northern Regional Office in Edmonton, at a restaurant, in my home and in my office as interviewee availability and time constraints dictated.

Initial interviews began with a statement of the purpose of the study and an explanation of the ethical considerations which would guide it. Interviewees were then asked to tell the story of how they came to Athabasca University and what it was like for them. Little effort was made to guide the conversation, although clarifying questions were asked from time to time. These interviews lasted from two to four hours each.

Two of the key informants who were unknown to me before the interviews, two others were nodding acquaintances and the remaining two were friends. As articulate people, they had little difficulty relating early biographic information which eased them into free-flowing recall of their experiences at the University. In the beginning stages, one participant tended to over-explain terms, procedures and systems as though I might eventually prepare a press-release, while one of the friends was tempted to glide over events and circumstances he felt I was very familiar with. Both effects diminished within the first third of the initial interview. A level of rapport appeared to be rather quickly established. As one informant commented, "This is wonderful. It's not very often I get a chance to spend hours just talking about me."

Transcripts of the first interviews were sent to informants before the initiation of a second round of interviews. Some participants did not read the transcripts, one corrected grammer, spelling and some word use before returning his copy, and others commented informally that they were dismayed that their spoken words looked as they did on paper. None changed a view or requested any substantial modification.

After the initial round of data analysis, follow-up interviews using an interview guide were conducted. These interviews were also two to four hours in length. As the study progressed, some formally requested interviews asking for specific information were requested with three of the key informants, supplemented by direct questions or clarifications posed to all respondents in informal meetings. These meetings lasted from a matter of minutes to three hours duration.

During the course of the interviews, respondents suggested other organizational members who would be able to supply further information in given areas, or provide other views. Thus, an additional six employees, administrators and Instructional Designers and a faculty member, were asked and agreed to participate in the study. With the exception of an instance where two separate interviews were conducted with one of this group, the interviews were single session and, in the beginning at least, topic-specific. These taped sessions were from thirty minutes to three hours in length.

Other comments exchanged in the halls or around coffee machines, or heard in more formalized settings were also used, some for direct inclusion, others as confirmation of emerging viewpoints. Where comments were used in the written materials, the speakers were contacted and asked for their permission. Although not formal interviews, these exchanges contributed to the data accumulation.

Documents

Documents were obtained from a number of sources. The most readily available material on the organization were publications prepared for general use such as annual reports and calendars. Internally circulated material such as newsletters, Task Force reports, committee reports and data on institutional research crossed my desk regularly and could be found in my own files. The Institutional Research group within the Center for Distance Education were willing to share charts and other data, at various levels of compilation, which had not yet been put into formal reports. Reference to archival materials produced further documentation. These documents are cited in the following pages, as appropriate, and are referenced in the bibliography wherever possible.

One of the key informants shared a considerable number of personal documents with me, including papers he had written and memos relating to particular topics touched on during the interviews. A secondary respondent also offered a complete file he had been accumulating for some years pertaining to one of the issues we discussed. A paper due to be published was provided by another secondary respondent. These documents were used basically for triangulation purposes and such sources as personal memos are not included in the following materials.

Observational Data

Interviews conducted in key informant's offices offered an opportunity to observe some non-verbal information about how people relate to their discipline, to their work-place and how they process their work flow. Other non-verbal cues were observed during the interview sessions and served as an additional guide to directing or redirecting discussion and to establishing rapport.

Formal and informal meetings involving a variety of organizational members and a number of institutional issues were also observed in an effort to validate patterns emerging from other data and to provide perception checks. This observational technique would be similar to Deisling's (1972, cited in Lincoln and Guba, 1985) "contectual validation" which "validates a source of evidence by collecting other kinds of evidence about the source".

Data Analysis in This Study

All interviews including the verbal acceptance to participate in this study were taped and transcribed. Notes were also taken during the meetings. Twice, the tape recorder did not work. In these instances notes were written up immediately following the interview and sent back to the informants for immediate verification while the exchange was still relatively fresh in both our memories. Nearly 800 pages of typed transcript data were eventually available.

Following transcription of the first interviews, notes were made in the paper margins which were then transfered to subject notations in a card file. Some reduction of the data and broad patterns emerged from this process. After the second round of interviews, which included those conducted with secondary informants, the card system appeared too cumbersome. To further organize the material, a summary sheet was made and attached to the beginning of each transcript, with key words, phrases, or descriptions underlined. Underlined sections of the summary sheets indicated a more specific definition of categories. Using these categories an additional series of papers were drawn up in which passages from various transcripts which related to the subject were placed together.

As a further check, I enlisted the assistance of a term employee at Athabasca University. A list of the catagories was given to her and she was asked to review the entire data and note every item that pertained to the particular category under consideration. Her list was then compared with my own. I discovered that in some instances she came up with passages I had over-looked and in other instances suggested passages which were too remote from the subject matter for serious consideration. However, the vast bulk of her findings were consistent with my determinations. The two lists were amalgamated and further divided into sub-catagories. Thus, a catagorical map was constructed which spanned the accumulated data and was cross-referenced to the organizational pages of each interview. This map was used as a guide to writing the narrative report.

As the narrative developed, it became evident that more information was needed in certain areas. Thus, documents were investigated and further direct interviews were conducted. The additional data were slotted in to the category pages to contribute to the emerging picture. Further categories and sub-categories were established and another narration was begun. Several iterations of this procedure are represented in the pages that follow.

When a complete draft existed it was shared with a senior colleague who would be able to comment on the congruency of the written work with his understanding and observations of the "world known in common". His response indicated that the material represented an accurate reflection of the situation, adding "I've had a number of these conversations myself over the years".

An audit trail was kept. As the study developed the notes became less conceptual and more procedural.

Triangulation

Multiple sources of data collection were used in this study. From these sources events which occured in the past that affect current events could be established. As well, the present situation as viewed by key informants could be placed in a broader context.

Triangulation the process of "checking inferences drawn from one set of data sources by collecting data from others" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:198). Observational data, documents, key informant interviews, secondary informant interviews and respondent validations were triangulation techniques used in this study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985:306) note that in a naturalist enquiry it is "not possible in advance to patch together multiple designs". Rather different modes of data collection come logically to hand as the investigation proceeds. In this study, in-depth interviewing and document examination were planned in advance. However, the "snowball technique" (Bogden and Biklen, 1982) by which one informant suggests others in the field who would be able to supply further information was not anticipated, nor was the richness of the field itself as a source of data fully appreciated before the study began.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. The first three comprise the introduction, conceptual framework and methodology. Chapter 4 describes the setting and introduces the participants. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the entry experiences and role acquisition activities as academics engage in the process of becoming distance educators. Chapter 7 considers the organizational culture in which role learnings take place and the impact of the culture on adaptation processes. The final chapter presents the conclusions and implications arising from the study.

Study Format

1. Request formal permission to do study from the Academic Vice President.
2. Approach each targeted individual requesting their cooperation in supplying information and data. Assure confidentiality of records, identities and information. Agree to refrain being a member of a group committee or panel which might be charged with decisions affecting the career of the targeted academic.
3. Perform initial unstructured interviews.
4. Analyze data and assign initial categories which appear to account for the findings.
5. Return to sample group for follow up interviews designed to clarify, expand or adjust existing data. This procedure may be repeated as found necessary or desirable by either the interviewee or the researcher.
6. Interview any other significant individuals suggested by the interviewee.
7. Investigate existing documents such as manuals, job descriptions, terms of employment. Request additional documents which interviewees may have and/or would care to make available to the researcher.
8. Employ any unobtrusive measures which may present themselves during the process of the inquiry.

***

Chapter 4:

SETTING OF THE STUDY

There are four universities in the Province of Alberta, Canada. The oldest, the University of Alberta, was founded in 1906. It currently has an enrolment of 23,000 full-time students. The University of Calgary began in 1945 as a branch of the University of Alberta and reached full autonomy in 1966. Enrolment in 1986 was 20,667 full- and part-time students. The University of Lethbridge, established in 1967 to accommodate increasing enrolments at U of A and U of C and to reduce regional disparities, serves a population of about 2,000 students. (World of Learning, 1987). All three institutions offer both graduate and undergraduate programs.

The most recent addition, in 1970, was Athabasca University. It was initially established to relieve enrolment pressures at the University of Alberta and to offer an educational alternative to existing universities. Athabasca University's mandate evolved into a distance education facility offering undergraduate degrees (Hughes, 1980, Centre for Distance Education Statistics, 1987).

Athabasca University, in 1986, enroled 9,577 students. While the majority of these part-time students take one course at a time, some are registered in two or more courses for a total of 13,151 registrations in 178 courses (Centre for Distance Education Statistics, 1987). Three degree programs are available -- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Administration (B.Admin.), and Bachelor of General Studies (B.G.S.). The B.G.S. is designed for those who wish to amalgamate previous credit or for those who desire to pursue a self-directed course of studies (Athabasca University Calendar, 1986).

Urban students out-number rural students by a 2:1 ratio with the largest number of urban students located in the city of Edmonton, Alberta. Canadian students, located in areas outside of the Province of Alberta, take Athabasca University courses, accounting for 2,341 (or about 25%) of course enrolments. Reflecting Athabasca University's historical role in serving the needs of the adult part-time learner, 82% of the students are 25 years and older, while only 3% of the student population can be considered full-time students if the Student Finance Board's definition of completing 18 credits within a 12 month period is accepted as the criteria for defining full-time learners. Athabasca University has experienced rapid growth. In the five years between 1981 and 1986 the student population increased by approximately 50% (Centre for Distance

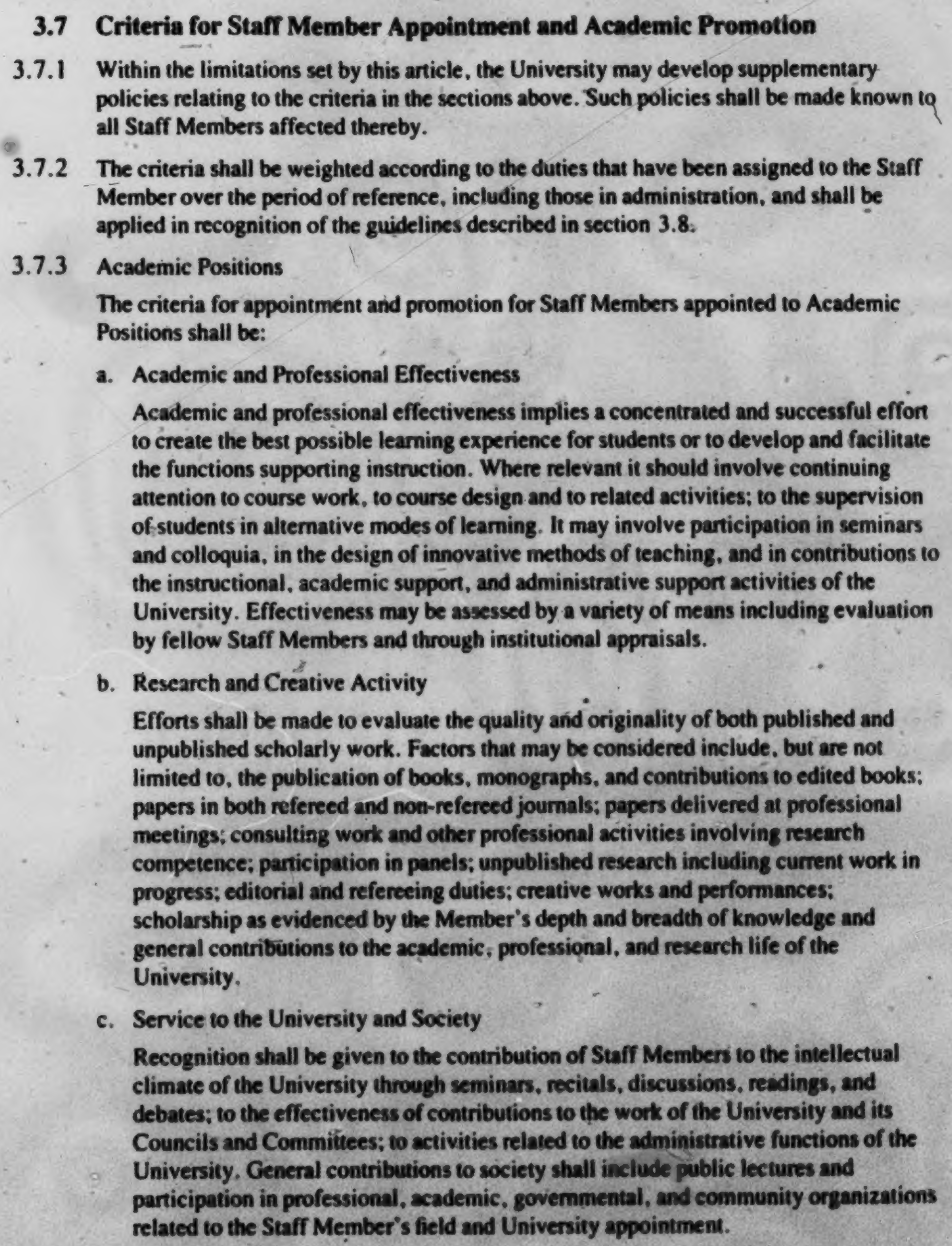
Education Statistics, 1987).

There are 44 full-time academic staff members at Athabasca University, 11 of whom are women. Academic staff designations include six full professors, 19 associate professors, and 20 assistant professors. Approximately 200 tutors, who do not have academic ranking, work with students, chiefly on a one-to-one basis over the telephone, in courses which are coordinated by the professors. There are two faculties: the Faculty of Arts and Sciences which consists of 29 academic members, and the Faculty of Administrative Studies with 11 members. In addition, there is the newly-established Centre for Research in Distance Education employing four academics who were formerly classified as instructional designers.

Designation of a staff member as an academic is a function of the Universities Act. At Athabasca University an "Academic Staff Member" is defined to mean "a staff member designated as such by the University in the terms of his appointment, and who is therefore subject to those sections of the Agreement which apply only to Academic Staff Members" (Terms and Conditions Agreement: Professional Staff, 1986). The criteria for staff member appointment and academic promotion are included in Figure (4) page 107.

FIGURE 4

CRITERIA FOR APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION



3.7 Criteria for Staff Member Appointment and Academic Promotion

3.7.1 Within the limitations set by this article, the University may develop supplementary policies relating to the criteria in the sections above. Such policies shall be made known to all Staff Members affected thereby.

3.7.2 The criteria shall be weighted according to the duties that have been assigned to the Staff Member over the period of reference, including those in administration, and shall be applied in recognition of the guidelines described in section 3.8.

3.7.3 Academic Positions

The criteria for appointment and promotion for Staff Members appointed to Academic Positions shall be:

a. Academic and Professional Effectiveness

Academic and professional effectiveness implies a concentrated and successful effort to create the best possible learning experience for students or to develop and facilitate the functions supporting instruction. Where relevant it should involve continuing attention to course work, to course design and to related activities; to the supervision of students in alternative modes of learning. It may involve participation in seminars and colloquia, in the design of innovative methods of teaching, and in contributions to the instructional, academic support, and administrative support activities of the University. Effectiveness may be assessed by a variety of means including evaluation by fellow Staff Members and through institutional appraisals.

b. Research and Creative Activity

Efforts shall be made to evaluate the quality and originality of both published and unpublished scholarly work. Factors that may be considered include, but are not limited to, the publication of books, monographs, and contributions to edited books; papers in both refereed and non-refereed journals; papers delivered at professional meetings; consulting work and other professional activities involving research competence; participation in panels; unpublished research including current work in progress; editorial and refereeing duties; creative works and performances; scholarship as evidenced by the Member's depth and breadth of knowledge and general contributions to the academic, professional, and research life of the University.

c. Service to the University and Society

Recognition shall be given to the contribution of Staff Members to the intellectual climate of the University through seminars, recitals, discussions, readings, and debates; to the effectiveness of contributions to the work of the University and its Councils and Committees; to activities related to the administrative functions of the University. General contributions to society shall include public lectures and participation in professional, academic, governmental, and community organizations related to the Staff Member's field and University appointment.

Source: Athabasca University Terms and Conditions: Professional Staff, 1986: 11.

Key Informants

The group of key informants for this study consisted of all but one of the individuals who received Continuing Appointment (analogous to "tenure") during the 1985-86 year. The individual who did not participate had originally agreed to do so, but was under some time pressure to complete a course production commitment, and asked to be excused.

Key informants participated in a series of two to five unstructured to semi-structured interviews, each lasting from ninety minutes to four hours. Over 500 pages of transcript data was generated from the 17 interviews.

The composition of the core group was five males and one female, a ratio which is reasonably consistent with the demographics of the staff as a whole. Disciplinary concentrations in the sciences, social sciences, humanities and administrative studies were represented by these academics, although the composition of the group was not necessarily reflective of the relative proportion of faculty members in each area. With an average age of 47, the respondents tended to be slightly younger than the average 50.5 years of the faculty as a whole.

Although four of the academics interviewed entered at the assistant professor level, two had been hired at the rank of full professor -- factors which did not make them representative of the academic staff as a whole where academic members are generally hired at the assistant level.

As the study progressed and it became apparent that the viewpoints of other individuals within the institution were required to clarify, interpret, explain, or develop other perspectives, a series of additional interviews was conducted. The academic vice-president, two deans, two instructional designers and one established academic member. comprised this group. Most interviews were single, semi-structured, 90-minute interviews, although follow-up interviews of an additional 90 minutes were conducted with two members of this secondary group. Approximately 180 pages of data from the sending group interviews was produced.

As might be expected, a number of changes occurred in the lives of the key informants during the time of the study. However, it was not anticipated that life circumstances would be static, but would reflect the flux of change which inevitably shapes a participant's emerging view of the world which he or she inhabits.

For the most part, participant's responses are cited from the transcriptions of tapes. Changes made to these oral accounts are basically limited to the elimination of verbal pauses such as "uh","hmm", "well", and the like, and, to a limited degree, to the rearrangement of the order in which some related material is presented. The rearrangement reflects instances in which an informant returned to a subject or commented on a topic on more than one occasion in an interview. Rearrangement did not involve the imposition of priorities, structures, or emphasis. In addition, the editing of the transcripted responses has been minimal and does not involve the alteration of grammar or structure, although some punctuation has been introduced. In addition, identifying names, places, and details have been removed and a more generalized word or phrase inserted. These alterations are indicated with square brackets ([ ]).

Background of Key Informants

From the time they are five or six, academics are exposed to teaching models at the rate of about 200 days per year from kindergarten to Grade 12. As their university careers progress they continue to absorb the culture of education at the post-secondary level and are in a position to observe and imitate the role behaviors of the professoriate. Occasionally they are required to perform professorial roles as teaching assistants, research assistants, and information presenters. Corcoran and Clark (1984) have termed this phenomenon "mediated entry" to signify a lengthy period of role preparation before taking on the full mantle of a particular professional designation. Whereas this more general term can be applied to medical students, articling lawyers, and other professionals, only academics have experienced such a prolonged period of formal and informal preparation for the roles they are ultimately to play in the professional world. To recognize this difference, the term "preparatory socialization" has been chosen, for the purposes of this study, to indicate the extensive preparation academics experience prior to accepting a full tenure-track posting or prior to choosing an alternative setting in which to perform academic roles. The preparatory socialization period includes the personal and experiential activities which have been factors in shaping the total career pattern.

Prior to employment at Athabasca University each of the key informants had extensive training in their professional fields and traditional classroom experience. Each had at least one career shift, and all but one had significant professional and practical experience outside of a post-secondary educational institution.

Five of the key informants have PhDs, two obtained in Alberta, one in central Canada, and two outside of Canada. Four of the participants have one or more degrees from outside Canada, while the other two have received all of their academic training in Canada. The sixth is currently pursuing studies toward a senior degree.

The following section will present a short introduction to each of the key informants. The order in which they are presented follows the sequence of initial interviews. Included will be some of the factors involved in the pre-socialization or anticipatory socialization activities which helped to shape predispositions to academic work. The comments which are prefaced with an "I." are interjections from the interviewer. Comments preceded by an initial are direct reports from the interviewees.

Francis

Francis' office faces south, overlooking a stand of trees.

There are so many books in his allotted space that the volumes spill over onto his desk and table. Every work surface not occupied by computers, typewriters, and fans, is covered with papers. Yet there is no sense of confusion. Personal pictures and some regional artifacts contribute to the ambiance of the room. Francis lives in the Athabasca area. He speaks with enthusiasm of his community and life-style.

At the beginning of the first interview, Francis appeared somewhat nervous -- aware of the recorder and my note-pad. This problem lessened over the three hours of the initial interview and disappeared in subsequent interviews. Most of our discussions were held in his office, but one interview was conducted at a hotel restaurant in Edmonton to accommodate a particularly rushed schedule.

F. When I finished graduate work there were those who encouraged me to go into academic life, but I needed money to go on. I didn't finish my thesis until four years later (after seven times of redoing it). [I was always interested in disadvantageed groups]. That interest continued to develop all through grad school. . Every course I took, including statistics, I related to [these disadvantaged people]. I had gone to grad school culture-related with questions I couldn't answer. So I went to grad school to find the answers.

I. What kind of questions?

F. Oh, questions about learning styles, culture generally, measurement related concerns, how to interpret different achievement tests that were required by [the government]. They were inadequate, but I couldn't say why. In fact I went to [an eastern United States university] to study test construction and item analysis so I could make the

> world's first culture-free test (smile). I specialized in psychometrics. People find that a little strange, but I was a statistician. That's the reason why I took all the courses I could from [a professor] who was one of the leading authorities on test construction.

In the above passage, Francis says that his colleagues find his early graduate studies surprising. This likely reflects his later concentration in an applied field and the general lack of statistical emphasis to his later research and writings. Published works and professional activities are often factors upon which collegial judgements are based.

> So I went to grad school with all those culture-related kinds of questions. Took all the courses I needed and more, for both a Master's and a PhD, one right after the other. With that, I did not have a particular sense of being [interculturally bonded] and having to work with [that group].

Francis reported that his initial interest in culture-related questions was largely intellectual at the beginning of his academic career but became an emotional factor in his subsequent development. The change in his attitude and his self-image was the result of a challenge by a community activist. As his awareness of the culture grew, Francis became more involved in related activities.

> Later, I started work for the provincial government as a community development officer. The nice thing about that was that not only did it open me up to raw community experience, I was given a carte blanche by the province. They just said "Come and talk to us". There were no offices. [Other activists involved with the ethnic community at that time were attempting to start a community newspaper and a corporate program]. And so that first year we

> did everything. There were lots of proposals. We did a lot of running around, went without much sleep.
>
> When I finished my thesis, I was taken up by the passion of the movement and gave no thought at all to an academic career. And I could have, because the market was great, and there were jobs all over the place. I was encouraged to pursue an academic career. My old chairman encouraged me in that direction, but I chose not to pursue it. And that was fine. I never had cause to regret it. The cause and my missionary disposition were what motivated me then. What it did was line me up with an extraordinary field experience, then and in subsequent years, that few professionals get.
>
> In 1971, I fasted for the first time and began a spiritual journey which continues to this day. Of course, that has been a fascinating and rewarding experience.

Involvement in the spiritual life of the ethnic group increased Francis' dedication to preserving group culture and mores, both as a means to enhance his own inner growth and to assist those who were caught between an old culture and the invasive culture of Canadian society. After working as a community director for four or five years, Francis recalls that he was "burned out". He left the province and went south to an area known for its focus on self-help activities for a period of about six months. For the time being, he had left behind the ground-breaking community work with all the stress and effort that such pioneering activities can entail.

> It was a marvelous place to go to meet all the dissidents of the academic and professional world. I spent about six months down there. When I came back, I could have set up a private practice and I did think about that. The Association asked me to come back and work for them.

> Very shortly, [a director] came around and asked me to come and work for him in the counselor's training program. I was the first program coordinator for them. That was a marvelous experience. I burned out again because there was such need and demand. I was doing intense residential one- to two-week workshops, back to back. It was crazy when I look back on it, but, boy, did I ever learn to relate to adults. I had to in a hell of a hurry. I learned about human nature and [cultural] style and learning problems and learning objectives -- creating methods and techniques. That was a great experience!

Once more the level of activity and the demands of his work caused Francis to seek a career change.

> I burned out. Would have stayed there. Then I got an invitation from [a middle Canadian] university to take the job of chairman of [a department]. That was a major event because I had clearly and resolutely walked away from pursuing an academic career. I went through several days of reflection -- I felt as if I hadn't read a book for 10 years. And to step back into academic life -- could I do it? Part of me wanted it. Then when I walked back into the climate, being among the best people, well-read and up on things, I enjoyed it. I decided to take it, and I was there for four years -- 1975-79.
>
> There, again, I burned myself out. I tend to work hard anyway, no matter what. I was not only chairman of the department -- it was the fourth largest department of the university -- I was doing courses. I had a heavier course load, two terms out of four, than the regular instructors. Then I gave speeches, hustled bucks. So when the end of my term came, which was three years later, I had a sabbatical leave coming, and I asked for, and got, a year's unpaid leave. So I took off for a year and a half. I could have gone back. I had been reappointed chairman on a vote of eight out of nine. But I was so tired that, once I got down to [a southern State], it took about eight months to get back in shape. I realized I had to go back in a few months and I hadn't even started studying. So I resigned and stayed down there.

Resignation from one academic setting did not appear to imply a renewed rejection of academic life for Francis. Rather, further academic employment was built into his options for subsequent career development.

> While I was [down South], which became a three-year period, for the first year I could live off my sabbatical pay. Then I turned to consulting jobs, and I was lucky to get most of them in Canada, mostly giving advice. Once in a while I had to write something (laugh).
>
> Come the third year, we were anxious to get back to Canada. I sent my c.v. to different places and let it be known I was looking for work. Offers began to come, which was what I expected. Which happened all the time. (1.1.1.1- 1.1.4)

From Francis' descriptions of his background, at least five major themes can be distinguished. One is the almost missionary zeal with which he approaches life experiences. For example, redoing a thesis a number of times, seeking answers to culturally-related questions in graduate school, the devotion he reports throughout his applied experience as a practitioner, and subsequently his academic involvement. Even the "drop-out" experience during the early 1970s suggests a rather determined approach to coping with a life situation.

A second theme reflects the physical and psychological toll Francis' intense involvement extracted from him as reflected in his repeated references to "burning out". Thirdly, Francis' report suggests the significant effect his cultural ties on both his career choices and his development as an individual. Cultural concerns were directly responsible for choice of the subject matter focus in his studies, acceptance of pioneering roles with community agencies and eventual academic appointment. Immersion in the alternative culture resulted in religious and psychic explorations which appear to have had a profound impact on his way of life and his manner of relating to his world.

A fourth major theme relates to Francis' professional growth. Each position he accepted required that he build upon previous experiences and training. At the same time, each called for the development of new skills such as building programs where none previously existed, working with social problems considered virtually endemic in recent intercultural development, learning cultural mores and manners, relating to adults in new ways, administering, leading, and refining professional abilities.

Finally, there are the career shifts from post-graduate school to practical work, by choice; then back to an academic environment, and a later choice to leave that milieu. For the majority of those years Francis seemed to retain the thread of academic activities as evidenced by his teaching activities which likely required both preparation and evaluation as well as by his desire to maintain currency with his academic peers when returning to an academic role.

Rick

Rick's office is an inside one, fronted along the corridor with a curtained glass wall facing a staircase. Beyond is row of similar offices. A skylight extending over the central corridor supplies an abundance of natural light, Along with books, papers, and computer equipment, the office is decorated with personal pictures and memorabilia.

With his wife and small child Rick lives in Edmonton. Coming from a city of several million people, the family chose an urban setting which provides many amenities they have become accustomed to. He commutes to Athabasca two or three times a week and spends a considerable amount of time at the Athabasca University Northern Regional Office (NRO) in Edmonton.

I had not met Rick before asking for his participation in the study which meant that some time was spent building rapport. One interview was held in his office; the other at the Northern Regional Office. Rick was born in one large middle Canadian province and educated in another.

> R. I started in journalism but had taken an introductory policy science course and was very pleased with the precise answers it could give. It took several more years of studying [in that area] before I realized that a lot of those precise answers -- well, they weren't really as precise as they seemed at first glance.

The answers that he did get were evidently sufficient to encourage Rick to continue study in the area. The certification he subsequently received enabled him to use his education in the public sector.

R. After my Master's I went to work. I worked in the federal government for about three and a half years. The economics and the policy side in the various outlets of the federal government are very, very big organizations and so I very much felt like a little fish in a big pond. I certainly thought that one would have a chance to get into a lot more interesting work by going back and doing a PhD. As well, there was the opportunity for teaching at a university and the flexibility that that gave me.

I. So you were looking at going into either career. You could have gone into the public sector or you could have come into teaching. At the moment, you've decided in favor of teaching. Why?

R. I suppose my main interest is developmental [areas] and so I wanted to have a chance to do some work there and really to be able to define my own research interests for awhile. A teaching job allows you to do that to a greater extent.

Rick's research interests focus on industrialization concerns in Third World countries. As much needs to be done in developing appropriate policy action to be taken in these areas, Rick feels that there are significant and important issues to be dealt with to which he could make some contribution. His interest in Third World countries was sparked during a trip abroad as an undergraduate.

I. And how did your interest develop from there?

R. I suppose it was observing the different ways that people live. The problems of development, in a sense, put Canadian domestic problems into perspective and certainly made them seem less onerous, less difficult, less important. And so it just awoke in me, as it does in many people, a tremendous curiosity as to why development had, in a sense, succeeded in some areas and not in other areas. I became interested in the debate as to what could be done to accelerate equitable development in different regions.

I. And did you feel that you could make a better contribution to that area with the PhD than in the trenches -- going out to work in the field?

R. Yeah. If one was going out with a Master's degree, typically, an expected career path might be to go to work for CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) or something like that. I was more interested in seeing if I could contribute on the research end, on doing work examining different aspects of development. And, again, a flexibility, of course. If you're working for CIDA, you know, you can find yourself on the Latin American desk or wherever, and that defines the kind of region you're going to be working on and the types of projects essentially coming from the top down.

So certainly, doing a PhD offers you the opportunity of acquiring a teaching position, and that gives you the independence to at least go out and follow your own research interests.

It would appear that the range of challenges and opportunities to react to emerging developments are important considerations to Rick as he forges his career. He also appears to take a considered and thoughtful approach to his work.

One of the things that interests me in my research area is that mistakes are very, very expensive in Third World countries. Inappropriately designed policies, wrong-headed policies, are very, very expensive for the people who are forced to endure the consequences. And there's no shortage of examples of policy failures in Third World countries.

Rick's choice of discipline appears to have become a focus for both his present and future career.

> I find it interesting. I've had a hard time thinking of why I should deviate from that path, I guess. (2.2.1.1 - 2.1.4)

Rick also experienced a career change -- in his case, from journalism to policy science. Once chosen, his discipline seems to have become an important and even necessary part of his life.

Again, like Francis, Rick indicates an ardor for the work he is engaged in, in part due to a perception of need and a feeling of wanting to contribute to the betterment of disadvantaged peoples. Upon finding himself caught up in group needs to develop emerging economies, Rick returned to his own comparatively resource-filled culture to acquire the tools he felt he required to respond to real and perceived inequities.

Rick appears more interested in making his contribution to Third World countries though research findings, which he suggests can help allay the consequences of making inappropriate policies, rather than through a more "hands-on" approach. He seems to equate the attainment of a PhD with giving himself options to allow for considerable research activities while maintaining contact with the "field".

His career path appears to be well thought out and consistent with his over-all goals. This is evidenced by his seeking "precise answers", continuing his studies, and building in flexibility for eventual practice either in the academic area or in the public sector. Rick does not appear to be concerned with the variety of locations or particular job activities with which he may have to deal in order to follow his professional endeavors. In this report he indicates interest in a number of Third World countries where his contributions may be valued. By implication, taking a position at Athabasca University, in a rather remote corner of Canada, to further his academic career would also seem to indicate Rick's willingness to accept relocation.

Beth

Beth's office tends to be uncluttered, suggesting a rather "unlived-in" look. Only a few working papers and books are about. On the wall near the window is a drawing done by a small child. The blinds are drawn creating a serene atmosphere.

Interviews were conducted in Beth's office at Athabasca University, while shorter sessions were held in the hallways as we passed each other during the course of the day. In these latter talks, Beth would reflect on issues that had been mentioned in more formal interviews, or we would discuss the current status and evolving circumstances of matters related to our discussions. Her story:

B. I went to a small liberal arts college in [an eastern state], and there I learned everything I know about reading and writing. I got a very good liberal arts education, but I was a science major at the time. Then I went to [a western Canadian university] as a graduate student in [science] and there realized that it was not what I wanted to do. So I switched over to ethology and took -- I forget what it's called -- it's a make-up year anyway, that gives you the equivalent to an arts degree. And then I took a Master's program. Then I transferred to [a different eastern State university] which is where I got my PhD.

I. Why did you travel clear across the country to [western Canada]?

B. That was because, at the time, I wanted to do something utterly different from what all my schoolmates were doing. I just really wanted to strike out on my own, and I couldn't think of a way of doing it more thoroughly than that. I'd never been to [western Canada]. I didn't know a single person there.

I. The shift in discipline, too, must have done a lot to your life.

B. Oddly enough the shift from science to ethology was not the jump it appeared to be. A lot of people will tell you that. You can be interested in a lot of theoretical issues in science which come very, very close to ethology. They can be truly philosophy of science issues. At my liberal arts college, research at the cutting edge was not emphasized that much. What was emphasized was a real thorough grounding in principles -- scientific principles -- and that's pretty much what you get in philosophy of science. So for me, I was learning what I was really interested in. I thought it was science, but it really wasn't.

I. And you never looked back on that choice?

> B. Oh no.! Some of my choices were unlucky maybe, but I don't regret anything. It was maybe unluck to have taken a PhD in my area when I did, but I don't regret doing it. It was the subject area that attracted me and still does. I never regretted the choice.

Obtaining a degree was not an entirely satisfactory entry into the job market for Beth. Jobs in her area were scarce, and university budgets were tightening or focusing on more career-oriented programs.

> From that point, I took many, many years of sessional lectureships because I happened to get my PhD at a time when there weren't very many jobs. I taught at [three Canadian universities] as a sessional lecturer.

The pursuit of the discipline that Beth chose appears to have been more important to her than other career considerations.

> Actually, I didn't really decide to become an academic until grad school. There was the influence of various professors who taught me what ethology was. And I never looked back.
>
> You see, I have never been career oriented, so that thinking in terms of the phrase "career decisions" is just not appropriate for me. The only way be involved in my discipline and earn a living is to work in a university -- other than wait table or something like that. But I have never been career oriented, truly. I'm not interested in moving up in the ranks. Working at a university is an opportunity for me to interact with students and pursue my discipline. The year before [after I had been working at the fourth university for a while] I decided I couldn't stand being a sessional lecturer anymore. I had been a sessional lecturer for eight or nine years, without every getting a full time job out of it or a permanent job out of it.

With positions in her area hard to come by, Beth nevertheless felt she had to leave the situation that she did have and try her fortunes elsewhere. This was done with no indication that there would be a job for her in the new location. By this time, there also appeared to be some bitterness that more permanent employment was not forthcoming after a rather extended apprenticeship period.

> I came to Alberta because I had a lot of friends here. I was unemployed for a while and then became a tutor at AU. I was only working part time when I heard about AU -- actually through John Theisen. It was John who put me on to Daniel Granger who gave me an interview and hired me to tutor the old, original [first humanities course offered at Athabasca University]. And when the position [in my field] was advertised, I, of course, applied for it. And got the job. (3.1.1.1 -1.1.3; 3.2.1.1 - 2.1.3)

When a transition between one distinct life situation and another occurs (e.g. the transition from spouse to widow, or from student to professional worker), the process of moving into the new state is termed "entry" (Van Maanen, 1975) or "passage" (Sheehy, 1977). Entry signifies that the individual has experienced anticipatory socialization largely from the viewpoint of an outsider attempting to understand a world he or she is about to enter.

If the transition is from one socializing event into a similar but more autonomous aspect of role behavior (e.g. from articling law student to attorney or from graduate student to professor), the term "mediated entry" may be used to describe the process. Mediated entry suggests that the individual has had some opportunity to practice part of the role behaviors under supervision before undertaking the full responsibilities involved in role enactment.

However, when an individual is in a part-time or term position crosses functional or hierarchical boundaries to become a full fledged organizational member, a different term is required to encompass the concept of fulfilling a role with only limited concern for the entire responsibilities, benefits and drawbacks of permanent status. Thus, the term "presumptive socialization" may be used to indicate the activities, learnings and understandings involved in restricted (time, space and function) aspects of fulfilling a role within an organization prior to assuming full organizational status.

Beth was one of two people in this study who experienced presumptive socialization. As a tutor, she had experience in a part-time organizational role performed largely at a distance from the employing institution. Due to her contacts with academic staff, participation on committees and information supplied on a regular basis by the University, Beth came to know a great deal about such matters as the structure of the organization, the people involved and their roles, the mandate and the technology. What she could not anticipate were the changes involved in becoming a full status organizational member, or the altered view of the organizational world she would need to acquire in order to conform to group expectations and to fulfill a role of greater responsibility. In these instances, event perspectives tend to shift in relation to the position they are viewed from.

As in the cases of Francis and Rick, Beth underwent a shift in career orientation -- in her instance from science to the humanities. Her career choice became central to her view of herself as an individual, her choices of occupation, and her single-minded devotion to her subject area which has become a life work.

Like the two informants already introduced, Beth is willing to follow her vocation to localities which allow her to practise and grow in her chosen profession. Evidence can be seen in her choice of schools. For example, the university where she attained her PhD has a well-known graduate program in her area of specialization, while the western Canadian university offered her the opportunity to pursue a growing interest. It also appears that the people she met in these institutions, such has her professors, had a good deal of influence on her choice of discipline. As well, her work at five different universities afforded her an opportunity to teach, although these positions did not offer her either security or full professional status. Yet Beth continued to be concerned about pursuing her discipline, while seeking a more agreeable position she felt would be compatible with her professional goals.

Jim

Jim's office also faces south. Besides a general litter of papers on available surfaces, there was nothing particularly personalized about his office. A new and more advanced computer which he was just learning to use was on his desk.

Jim rarely sits completely still. He appeared rather uncomfortable with both the format and the tape recorder during the first interview, however in subsequent interviews Jim relaxed considerably as he became more accustomed to the process. Our interviews took place his office at Athabasca University.

Hired from a distant point in Canada, Jim was required to relocate his family to the town of Athabasca. During the time of our interview sessions, Jim and his wife determined that small town living was not a desirable alternative for them over a protracted period of time. Thus, they decided to move to a community just outside of Edmonton. The story of his presocialization began in his early days.

J. I didn't have any real problems in school. I was never at the top of the class until junior high, and then for some reason, I got interested. I don't know why, because that's about the time when most kids become uninterested. And it was about this time that I went from being, say in the top third, to about the top. So I was near the top of the class all of a sudden and just stayed there until sometime in university when I forgot about such things. (Laughter)

I. And you mentioned that your father had been a professor. Was that an influence, too, on your going on to an academic career?

J. Yes! You see, in hindsight, it wasn't necessarily the type of influence one might expect, in that I was never told that I should go to university. But I grew up right on the boundary of the campus, and I treated the campus as my playground. And to me school was a natural progression from Grade 1 through to the end of university. It just didn't occur to me that one didn't go. I knew that people didn't, but it wasn't something that I considered doing. And so, in that sense, yeah. It's not so much they influenced me, as his job had me hanging around the university, and I was used to the idea. I was surprised that other kids didn't have universities to play in. (Laughter)

I think, like any kid, I just knew that my dad went to work and where he worked, and I roughly knew what he did. But, I must admit, I saw the university mainly as an interesting collection of buildings, where there were lots of interesting things going on. For example, we kids in the neighborhood knew how to get in and out of those buildings all the time. Whether they were locked or not. And we had all sorts of stunts and tricks for gaining access.

I graduated from high school in '66. Fairly high marks at the time. I decided to go to [the same university where my father worked]. After a bit of wandering, I enroled in engineering. Did very, very well the first year, started having a good time, and not so well in the second year. Took a year off and went to Europe. Came back and did even less well the third year -- still having a great time. Decided to pick up my socks in the fourth year. Picked them up fairly well. I would have been in the top 20%. I lost a lot by fooling around. I think I was about sixth out of 400 my

> first year. So. A long dive and fairly decent climb back. That would be 1971.

Although Jim was apparently doing well with his schooling, and had intentions of going on, he had other options he also wished to explore.

> Then I decided that I'd enjoyed Europe so much that I went again. I took another year off. I had arranged to get into the Master's degree program (in a different discipline area) the following year before I left. So I came back and spent two years in the Master's program. Then I went to work for about 15 months at [a large utility company]. I forget what it was called, but it was a staff engineering group. But I still had wanderlust and decided I didn't want to live in [an Alberta city] and work for a large corporation, so I quit. Headed with my girlfriend at the time to the coast and we spent a good deal of the winter on an island there. (4.2.1.2 - 2.1.4)

The work he undertook in his Master's degree appeared to have been fortuitous and to have formed the basis for his future career.

> I. Did your choice of discipline have something to do with that freedom of choice?
>
> J. I think the discipline chose me. I was interested in this material and I think that's how I allowed it to choose me. But I never did sit down and say, "Well, if I'm going to be an academic, what academic discipline should I be in?" It's a series of random errors and minor decisions that sort of ultimately had me doing this type of thing.
>
> I. But still there must have been something in that random error that matched something within you.
>
> J. For sure! Each of the small decisions that one makes are based on something along those lines. But the whole sequence of decisions don't make a lot of sense looked at from the perspective of 20 years ago and ending up here, for example, 20 years later. A lot of my decisions were made primarily because I

> could not stand the idea that they wanted me to spend my whole life, working my buns off, to get a lousy three weeks off in the summer so that I could drive my trailer behind everyone else. (Laughter) I just couldn't stand the idea, and I, in fact, quit my job with the utility company precisely because I could see that happening.
>
> I was just out of school. I was not ready to put on my suit for the next 40 years, and that's where I was being pushed, and that's where they were aiming me. In fact, there, I got two weeks off every summer, and if I worked like a dog for five years, I'd get three weeks off. And I finally just decided I only had one life and I wasn't going to do it that way. So, I quit and went and lived in a fisherman's shack on the west coast for a winter. Which was much more to my liking, but it wasn't very lucrative.

The necessity of finding employment required relocation and leaving behind a desired life-style for a less than ideal, but practical job situation.

> We went from there to [back to the city] where we planned to settle down, but we both had a lot of trouble finding jobs. It was the fall of '75. Everything was tight. There wasn't a job to be found in [the province]. She ended up finding a job in another city actually. So we both decided to pack up and go. Worked there for the provincial government for about two years. This job was an aberration. A friend of a friend who administered the agency was looking for people. I needed money, they needed bodies, and I ended up staying two years. It was an absolute zoo!

General dissatisfaction with corporate life seemed to have spurred Jim to seek employment in an academic setting.

> I finally ended up seeing a job ad for [a small university] in [a middle Canadian city]. I think because the city I then lived in was in the general orbit, it was in the [provincial] papers. I moved there with my girlfriend of the time -- not the same one -- she's now my wife. And we spent about two years again -- I seemed to have been on a two year

> cycle, although it was never planned that way -- about two years at that university. I quite liked the job. It was pretty well the same stuff I'm doing now.

However, the demands of a two-career family can call for some adjustments on the part of both participants.

> Had I seen myself at the time as somebody who was eventually going to be married and settled down with kids and all of that, I probably still would be in [that city]. But Laverne couldn't find a job to save her life and we finally just decided that if she were going to work anywhere we would have to head back to one of the three major cities. We weren't crazy about heading back to the prairies. So we chose Toronto and headed down there. I got a job at [an aircraft company]. I absolutely detested it, but I realized when I walked into it, I'd walked into the wrong job. I couldn't walk out as my record would look absolutely horrid if I had. So I stayed there for 11 months before I finally found my way to [a college] in [a suburban neighborhood]. I spent -- I imagine it was about three and a half years. And teaching again pretty well the same material as I'm dealing with here.

The lure of a more relaxed life-style was still a factor for Jim. Also, he and his wife had started a family which caused them to be drawn to the larger family ties in their home area and put prairie living in a more attractive light.

> I spent a lot of time looking at buying into a franchise business, and my plans were to take it to [a coastal city], which is where I'd really like to live. And the actual way I ran across the job ad -- I wasn't even looking to apply for other jobs, I was trying to work this business out so that I could eventually quit my job down east and just start my own. And it was through talking to my father over the phone to see how much money he could lend me and telling what the reason was we wanted to head back west, that a few weeks later I got the job ad that he'd seen in University Affairs or something.

Jim he was the only member of the informant group who had a parent as a model for subsequent career behavior. Although his father's example may have been important at some sub-conscious level, Jim points out that during childhood, his father's activities were taken for granted. However, his physical location near the campus where he grew up had a significant impact on his "building-in" life-style predispositions as well as expectations that he would complete university as a matter of natural progression through an educational period.

Independence is another theme that flows through Jim's narrative. In his case, freedom of choice was coupled more with life-style than with pursuing a profession, as other respondents report. Evidence of his desire for freedom of action can be seen in his reference to twice "taking off" for Europe rather than continuing his studies, and living on the west coast for a winter rather than remaining with a job he considered confining and to some extent dehumanizing. Jim speaks frequently of his desire to escape from the restrictions of the corporate world, although his views appeared to shift after marriage and the birth of his children. In the latter part of the account, Jim seems less concerned with freedom of life-style and more with an improved quality of life for his family. Yet twin threads appear in his story. One is the importance to him of his discipline. In common with other respondents, Jim appears to indicate a "call" to the academic area he eventually chose. The other is his distaste for jobs as a professional in industry and his repeated return to academic settings.

Wilfred

The office where Wilfred works faces north onto a sort of courtyard. Manuals of various descriptions are on the bookcases and work surfaces. There are also a few books, binders, and papers. A computer is the focal point in this room. The only obvious personal touch to the office is a small framed picture on the wall of an aerial view of a farm.

Wilfred is the only academic at Athabasca University to be recruited from the Athabasca area. At the beginning of his appointment, he was required to commute to Edmonton as the move preparations were being finalized. Wilfred has extensive ties to and involvement with the community that extend over a 15 year period.

One interview with Wilfred was conducted in his office and the other in mine. He indicated that he found the process tiring, but was an enthusiastic informant, although cautious in some of his statements and judgements.

Wilfred grew up in a western state where his parents ran a bakery. He served with the armed forces during war time. When the war ended, he remained in the far east working as a technician and a technical instructor. These activities gave him a variety of opportunities to explore and implement the technologies of the day, as well as an opportunity to experience a number of cultures during the reconstruction period.

W. I decided to go back to University and enroled in [a German university]... That was really an educational experience. Certainly the most rigorous academic experience I ever experienced apart from some of the later work in graduate studies. I did the whole thing in German. My folks were from Germany so I had a smattering of the language. But I certainly didn't have a command of it. So I had to learn the language as well as the material.

It was a real eye-opener, the difference between educational standards in Europe and in the U.S. So much more rigorous!

The German university was anxious to re-establish itself as a world influence in education. In the past it had done many fine things. For example, it was the home of Carl Friedrich Gauss, probably the finest mathematician the world has ever known. I did the whole thing in German. Three semesters. By the time I finished my German was very good.

Anyway. Then I returned to the States and applied to [a prestigious west coast] university. They put together all that I had done in Germany and put me in fourth year as a senior.

I. Had you taken some university before?

W. Oh yes. I had taken two years before the army.

So I went on for my master's and doctorate all at the same time, finishing it all up. Then I went to [an Ivy League college] on a post-doctoral. They called it a fellowship, but it was really a post-doctoral. I had [the] fellowship for three years, but I only stayed one. I taught both graduate and post-graduate courses and worked on research. That was another rigorous academic

> experience. Then I left because I didn't like the atmosphere.

After having been in an academic environment for some time, Wilfred returned to the private sector in what he perceived to be an exciting and demanding area of development.

> I went to something called [a nuclear-related industry] in [a western state] which was a big laboratory with a very high percentage of computer scientists and engineers. Worked for many contractors. I worked there for seven years, and became what would now be called Director of [Technical] Services. We expanded to 70 people, but I was the manager of the branch in [technical] services.

Eventually, however, Wilfred was lured back to academia. His professional experiences seemed to lead to jobs in administration more than continued involvement with his area of expertise.

> I went down to a [another western State] university as director of their [technical] Centre and spent three years there in that position; I also had a joint appointment as Professor [in the technical area]. There was no [such] departments at the beginning at [this] university -- it was still part of the electrical engineering department. But I put together the structure of the centre and got some [technical] sciences courses introduced. And, in that position, installed and, in fact, went out and negotiated and made a deal -- bought really essential equipment and the biggest [hardware] available at that time. But then it really got too hectic as an administrator. I stayed there for six years. And then, I just simply decided that was enough for me, so I retired.

Not only did Wilfred expand his knowledge and ability in his chosen field, he also was able to use his expertise to provide for more material considerations.

I. So you've gone in and out of academic environments?

W. As a matter of fact, you're right. But I never really left. Oh, yeah, for the industrial experience, there was nothing like it. It was much more exciting. The idea that at a national laboratory like that, there was lots, lots, going on. Lots of scientific engineering. To participate, to join and do things with your hands, so to speak, as well as writing programs. Much more tangible than teaching. Or doing individual research. A very substantial reason I could give is money.

I was making (laughter) -- oh, my word, if I can remember -- in the 57-58 academic year, I think I made $5,600. Now the starting salary [at the laboratory] was $10,200. That was very significant! At that time, $5,600 was borderline poverty. $10,000 was not quite "fast-lane" but it was getting near it.

But I never did really leave teaching. I taught in graduate school for [a different western state university]. They had an extension branch at [the small town near the laboratory] and I persisted in teaching every single year while I was there. And I had several graduate students who got master's degrees at that time -- quite a few. And so I guess I was always in school. And when I finally left, that was a big decision.

I ended up at [a state university] as head of their department. That was from 1968 to 1974. That's God's own country. That's where God shined on the earth, in that corner.

Wilfred appeared to consider retirement more than once over the years. However, he was apparently not finished with active participation in an area related to his discipline.

I then decided to do free-lance consulting which I did for a couple of years.

I had already bought a place here and we moved here to start a new life. And then the University moved here and I decided to join it.

Wilfred appears to exhibit considerable dedication to his discipline and to his professional growth over virtually a complete career span. He sought out the most prestigious universities offering rigorous training in his area of specialization, even when the desired educational experience was in a foreign language. In addition, Wilfred strove to improve his skills and abilities through "hands-on" experience with powerful firms engaged in the research and production of technical components at the cutting edge of scientific development and application.

Relocation did not appear to be an impediment to his pursuing his career interests. In part due to his involvement during and after the war, Wilfred's career spanned the globe. Nor did academic tenure restrict Wilfred from pursuing those avenues he felt would best provide for professional enhancement. The prospects of earning more money in successive career moves, however, did appear to be a factor. Nevertheless, there is a sense of a strong sense of independence which runs throughout Wilfred's story.

Whereas Francis speaks of "burning out" and Beth refers to "getting fed up", Wilfred mentions "getting tired" and "retiring". Likely, these terms all refer to reaching some point of psychological and/or physiological saturation with existing situations. It appears in each of these accounts that the negative factors considerably outweigh the positive factors before a substantial change is effected.

Jake

Jake's office is next door to Rick's. It is also located on an interior corridor with a walls of windows covered by curtains. The room is pleasantly cluttered. Bookshelves are crammed beyond capacity, boxes of papers are tucked into corners, and work-in-progress is scattered throughout the room. The walls and windows are covered with a variety of artifacts and posters.

The format of the interviewing sequence was comfortable for Jake as much of his own research uses the same techniques. In fact, he offered his experiences for use as a case study if I felt it appropriate. Four interviews were held in his office.

> J. I got interested in becoming an academic after I worked in the Peace Corps in the 60's. I worked in the Third World and I thought there was an opportunity to contribute to people who were experiencing change, as a lot of the Third World countries are. I realized that in order to make an impact on them, I needed a union card. To work in development, one needed to be certified as an expert. One didn't influence policy in a developmental agency by being a field worker. So I went back to university essentially interested in [an applied field] with an emphasis on Third World development. What I did was complete a master's in [that field] at [a midwestern United States university] and came to [a university in Canada] because of a program they were to have there. It didn't materialize. But I did design a program that was appropriate to myself, and I concentrated for the next five or six years on rapid change in

> Canada, particularly the psychological aspects of rapid change. I studied Canadian boom towns.

After achieving his PhD, Jake spent the next several years working as an academic and as a field worker and researcher.

> As an [applied worker in my field] I worked for a variety of community groups, or [intercultural] groups, or government agencies. From that, for the next 10 or 15 years, I mainly was involved in research and consulting. I was also the Director of Medical School Research [at a Canadian university]. I taught community development [at that university]. Then I wanted to do some more teaching so I taught a year [in the department which housed my discipline]. Then I found I was getting burned out, that I was experiencing the horrors of what happens when applied changes -- when government in action--...I watched a community of people literally and culturally die in this province through the government [messing] around -- worse even than I'd seen during my year of research in Viet Nam during the war.

The human factor involved in his disciplinary work appears to have had a profound impact on Jake's career.

I. What do you mean "a community of native people literally and culturally dying"?

J. What I meant is that when I went there in 1970, to do fieldwork, there were approximately 282 people. About two of the people were drunks.

Yeah. Most of them had a drink at Christmas or once a year. That was about it. The government put a new town in there. I worked for the government to help the people get land claims. In 1984 another [culture-based] community hired me to find out why there was incredible unemployment. And problems with drinking. I did a study -- you might be interested in reading it. It's on culture shock.

Basically, what I found out, to my horror, was that the majority of the people were drinking. And couldn't keep a job. It was like looking at about 50 years of [cultural] history in the plains collapse in four years. A viable, independent

> people, with reasonable self-esteem, suddenly seemed a conglomeration of derelicts.
>
> After talking to you about your doing your thesis, it suddenly triggered the reasons I had for writing mine. And the anger I felt at what had happened because it didn't have to happen. You know, I felt that the government was morally culpable. What they did in essence, was after a long fight it gave them barely adequate land tenure without any resources to do anything with it. It's like giving someone a car without access to gasoline, while having promised it all along. It was so bad that at the final signing of the land tenure, I think only about 20 of the native people showed up to hear the Lieutenant-Governor's speech.
>
> I watched. I went to the funerals of the people who I'd known and grown to care about deeply. I watched them die. They'd get hit walking down the middle of the railroad tracks. People who hadn't been drinking the years before the tenure, died from overdoses of alcohol.
>
> And their culture died. [He reads from the report he wrote at the time] "These people stand powerless to do more without responsible government support. They are, in the words of the nineteenth-century English writer, Matthew Arnold, 'Standing between two worlds: one dead, the other powerless to be born'.

Jake's disillusionment led to an abrupt break with the life he had chosen and all that was involved with it.

> So about 1977, I was pretty fed up with the government and academia and everything else. I decided to leave it permanently and went out shoeing horses. I went down to [a provincial college] and got training as a ferrier. And I worked as a project manager of an inn -- a mountain resort. Then I got involved in building my own mountain resort and left that when the government approved funding and then ran out of money (laugh) which was not a happy experience. Then I drove a truck for a while and also worked as a gunsmith.

As there was less call for his expertise, and the general economy worsened, Jake had to reassess his choices and expand his options to once again include academic employment. One avenue towards seeking employment was to inquire among the various networks he had established over the years. An acquaintance who had been in some of his classes suggested a task-specific opportunity at Athabasca University, as a temporary solution.

> So, I came to Athabasca first as a term appointment to write a couple of courses on [intercultural groups]. When they had a competition for a permanent position, I applied and got that one.

Jake speaks with great passion about instances in his professional life. He appears to perceive himself as having thrown all his energies into a cause or causes he believed in, only to have external agencies cause irreparable damage to the projects he devoted himself to. Like Francis and Rick, Jake is caught up with the needs of developing peoples. Along with Francis, Jake conveys a sense of missionary zeal. He also speaks of the physical and mental demands of his professional work as causing "burn- out". In Jake's account, burn-out appears so severe that a denial of his previous activities, resulting in a significant career shift, seems to be the most attractive option. Along with Rick, Jake perceives little impact on the creation of policies for disadvantaged groups as a field worker. Both speak of the need for a credential or "union ticket" in order to be accepted as an expert who will then be able to influence developmental programs.

As did Beth, Jake came to Athabasca University as a part-time appointee, then applied for a permanent position and was successful. However, Jake, unlike Beth, had limited interaction with other academics and professionals as a term appointee. Outside of the immediate course team and the director of studies, his contacts would have been restricted. He would not have had the use of office facilities, and his work would be performed at a location of his own choice. At the same time, Jake could be said to have experienced "presumptive socialization": he received insider information that led him to believe he had a relatively good working knowledge of the organization before achieving full membership.

Jake is the only respondent to speak of research as a strong component of his professional life in the pre-socialization phase. Teaching was a lesser factor for him, although it was an aspect of the academic role that he appeared to enjoy.

The Researcher

Before leaving the introductions to the key informants, it seems fitting that I include a thumbnail sketch of myself as an active participant at Athabasca University, and as a participant observer in activities involving my colleagues.

Originally, I was hired at Athabasca University as Coordinator of Applied Studies, in 1979. Later the titles changed, in sequence, to Coordinator of Administrative Studies, Coordinator of Communication Studies, and Professor of Communication Studies, Faculty of Administration. The title changes reflect not only subtle role changes, but also the growth of the university, resulting in increased specialization of functions. During the time I have been with this university I have sat on every major committee. I have also had as many as 28 tutors and close to 3,000 students in my immediate jurisdiction, although that burden has eased considerably in the past year with the addition of new academic staff.

Although born in Alberta and a life-long resident, the bulk of my post-secondary education was taken in the United States. Most recently, the PhD program I am now involved in began at the University of Texas in Austin. Subsequently I re-enroled at the University of Alberta to complete my degree.

My family lives on a farm in the Edmonton area. However, I have a very old and very small house in Athabasca which is home to my young son and I when we commute for our three or four days a week in Athabasca. At the farm I have a computer and modem which links up to the mainframe at central office, so that I have full contact with both the

University and my tutors.

Athabasca University is a comparatively small institution where people get to know each other quite quickly. However, a combination of maternity and sabbatical leave meant that I was away from the day-to-day operation of the University for almost two years. In the meantime, a number of academics were hired who were either unknown to me, or known only as casual acquaintances. It was this group that I was interested in including in this study. As it happened, however, two of the key informants were put on probationary appointment during my absence and did not receive tenure until the time encompassed by this study. One I knew as a friend prior to our interviews, the other I knew quite well.

My office faces north overlooking a rock pond with three fountain spouts, concrete walkways, and beyond that a field stretching far into the distance. To the left is the inevitable parking lot. In my office there is an overcrowding of books, papers, computers, pictures, and memorabilia, interspersed with a profusion of plants which grow well in this northern light.

Summary

In the preparatory socialization phase, key informants each had extensive training in their chosen disciplines. The majority of respondents extended their professional training to include practical applications, outside of academia, in their respective fields.

Each respondent reported some experience in the conventional classroom. One experienced the teaching role only as a teaching assistant during his graduate studies, while on the other end of the continuum, another taught non-continuously for approximately 25 years.

Key informants all experienced at least one career shift. For two of the academics interviewed, the shift occurred during their university years. The other four pursued a number of career paths before coming to Athabasca University, including some which were considerably divergent from original professional directions.

Respondents report a high degree of involvement with, and commitment to, their chosen professions. Evidence can be seen in the considerable effort and expense required to pursue graduate studies, the sense of mission that some reported carrying forward in their professional lives and comments such as "it was exhilarating", "that is all I ever wanted to do", and "I didn't choose it, it chose me".

An additional major factor that is common to the key informants responses is the indication of a proactive stance in developing their abilities and skills in their academic areas. For some, this entrepreneurial trait manifested itself in relocating to areas where opportunities were greater (or at least available). For others, it was moving in and out of academic settings (sometimes forsaking tenure) in seeking the widest possible expression for professional application.

Life-style was an important factor in many career choices. On occasion, money was a significant motivator, although opportunities for autonomy were also important considerations.

Chapter 5:

ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION

The anticipatory socialization phase, in this study, is confined to the period between first making contact with the employing organization and entry into the organization as a successful candidate. During this period, it can be expected that individual's awareness of the organization would increase and that greater realism would be a factor in their decision-making processes as the prospect of adapting family, personal, and professional concerns became more probable.

Making Contact

Reporting members were looking for jobs, with varying degrees of intensity, when contact was first made with Athabasca University. As described in the previous section, two had initially joined the University as part-time employees; one as a tutor, the other to write a course as a term appointee. Both heard of the position from acquaintances in their disciplinary field. One reported:

> I think I was job hunting in general. The economy was the pits. I talked to Jenny Jones...Jenny was a classmate at the U. of A. I didn't know her well, but I knew her well enough to talk to. (6.1.1.2)

The other academic who had a longer period of employment with Athabasca University prior to accepting a full time position, was also introduced to the university through an acquaintance. She subsequently took a pro-active role in creating a full time position which matched her expertise and experience.

> I was in Edmonton, and only working part-time when I heard about AU -- actually through John Thiesen. It was John who put me on to Daniel Granger who gave me an interview and hired me to tutor. (3.1.1.1)
>
> As a tutor I lobbied to have the University establish a position in my disciplinary area because I thought it was a dreadful lack for a university to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree with none of these courses even offered. Well, obviously they saw this as a problem and eventually a position was established (3.1.1.2) I really couldn't not apply. Was probably a matter of pride, I suppose. I would have had to have served as a tutor for a course that I'd written, under somebody else. And I couldn't really see that. That would have been very, very

> difficult. (3.2.1.5)

As the above excerps indicate, a cosmopolitan network of academic acquaintances is important to career mobility and opportunity within the post-secondary area. In addition, being in the "right place at the right time" can be a consideration in obtaining a tenure-track position. An interesting aspect of the second account cited above is the indication of exerting significant influence on the employing organization while occupying the role of part-time employee.

Two others heard of the academic position at Athabasca University through advertisements in professional publications. For one prospective member, the information was a revelation:

> I read about it in that magazine put out by the Canadian Association of University Teachers--the CAUT Bulletin. I didn't know Athabasca University existed! I thought I knew about all the universities in Canada, but I didn't know about the one called Athabasca. (2.1.1.1)

Discovering the advertisement in a professional magazine was a different kind of revelation to the other reporting member who initially received the information from a family member.

> It was an ad--I think I read about it in University Affairs. But I saw that job ad. It seemed to have my name on it. (4.1.1.5)

For a fifth member, the return to an academic life was triggered by the university's move to his home location.

> I decided to leave the business I was in after eight years. And then Athabasca University came to Athabasca and I decided to join it. (5.1.1.1)

Only one candidate who was external to the organization received encouragement from university personnel to apply for an academic position:

> I sent my c.v. to different places and let it be known I was looking for work. Offers began to come in, which was what I expected. Which happened all the time. George got a look at it and he liked what he saw, I guess . . . I think it was the feature of so much applied experience. And the fact that it was cross-cultural. And not being limited as a specialist (my specialty is to be a generalist. By decision. Coming out of grad school). He wrote several times, called, and I always turned him down. There were several exchanges. He wanted me to come a year sooner than I did. I said "if you want to wait a year, call me again". Two months later, he called and asked me to come for an interview. It worked out very well. I had a contract in Vancouver, and on the way there, I dropped in. (1.1.1.5)

Nadler et al. (1979) predict that individuals seeking work settings gather information about organizations from a number of sources including advertisements, through friends and by presenting themselves as having values in line with those of the organization. All three instances can be discerned in the above accounts.

Learning about available job opportunities from friends and advertisements may be considered as gathering information from a limited number of sources. These activities for investigating the job market market tend to result in incomplete and partial pictures of what particular organizations and jobs are like, according to Nadler et al. (1979). However, when few jobs are available and decisions must be made which appear to offer a desirable balance of outcomes, networking and perusal of selected references offering the greatest likelihood of pertinent information are usually the best job search tactics for those who have been searching for some period of time.

Profferring an unsolicited curriculum vitae offers the organization an opportunity to judge the merits of a candidate prior to the initiation of formal search procedures. In turn, the individual is able to evaluate any employment opportunities that may result from these activities. The individual who offered his c.v. to a number of institutions appeared to have a choice of occupations. The person who applied because the University relocated to his home area restricted his choice to the one organization. It is unlikely he would have accepted a position with another institution had one been offered.

The Job Interview

Reference checks, submission of documentary evidence, presentations of papers to staff members, and one-on-one conversations are some of the procedures used from time to time at Athabasca University to judge the selection of a successful candidate for an academic position. The committee interview is one tool used in virtually all employment assessment processes.

As a purposeful planned communication, the employment interview provides a forum for the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages aimed at assessing such attributes as motivations, sensitivities, and mode of response to the occupational "fit" (Stewart and Cash, 1982; Schein, 1968). Thus, the interview is potentially a powerful method for judging people.

However, the general findings of research on the predictions of interviewers that a particular candidate will do well, or best, indicate that the predictions usually fail (Bayne, 1982) or, more optimally, succeed at just above the chance level achieved by flipping a coin (Cook, 1982). Prediction failure may be due to five main factors, according to Bayne (1982:55-56): one, job performance is influenced by a number of circumstances in the employee's personal and professional life; two, the absence of clear job descriptions; three, the interviewer not having a clear idea of what to judge; fourth, interview formats among candidates may vary considerably; fifth, lack of interviewer training. Wanous (1980) and Schein (1968) add an additional factor: lack of clear information exchange between the applicants and the organization.

While any or all of these factors may prevail during a particular interview session, one factor that may have been overlooked by these and other reporters is the divergence of interviewer perceptions of the attributes and attitudes most desirable in a prospective candidate. For example, here are hiring criteria as expressed by three administrators who among them judge all applicants. The first administrator focuses on a checklist of qualifications and skills, the second on academic credibility, and the third on the attitudes the newcomer may be expected to bring to the job.

> Completion of graduate degrees, publications: these are the kind of standard criteria they use in any university. Another would be the ability to teach. Now that we can interpret in two ways: classroom teaching or experience in distance education. The skills that you learn, or that you have, for teaching in a classroom can be adapted to distance education. Primarily what we're looking for is student orientation. A third factor would be an applicant's familiarity with adult education, whether that be first hand or second hand. Obviously, we'd look for someone who has first hand experience in adult and distance education. But that's not necessary--it's the orientation that's most important. Another important criterion is the ability to work independently. And that encompasses time management and organizational skills. And have they gone to the bother to find out, first of all, that Athabasca University is around, what it's

about, and secondly, where it fits into the network of distance education? To me, that's very important. If somebody comes into an interview and they don't even know what's in our calendar, right away they've almost no chance of being appointed. And sometimes you get into a discussion as to whether the onus is on the institution to give that to applicants. I firmly believe it is not! It is up to a person who is interested to find out about what situation they're getting into. If they haven't even tried that, then to me, they have a long way to go. I'm not saying we wouldn't hire somebody who hadn't done that, but they have a lot of ground to catch up. (10.1.1.1-1.1.2) I think I attach some importance to collegiality. I wouldn't overly state that. I think it's important that people who come in, fit into this institution. And yet there are some people who just won't fit in. (10.1.1.4)

When you're hiring an academic, first of all, there's a basic premise on which Athabasca is based and that is, that it is a university. . . . We have a commitment, it seems to me, and I feel very strongly about it, to having an in-house resident academic in any discipline that we teach. (11.1.1.1) And I hope they don't have too narrow a view. You want people alive in their field, open to new ideas, flexible, and all those sorts of things that I believe come with the kind of inquiring mind and attitude towards learning that a good researcher brings. To me, it's the spirit of the thing more than anything else. It's the attitude. (11.1.1.11) I think that for us to go out and get Nobel Prize winners is kind of counter-productive, because of the sorts of demands we make on our people. I don't think we're in the business of looking for people who are going to revolutionize their field in a research sense. But, on the other hand, the tendency to hire people right out of grad school, I think is a real problem in that you really have to have had some teaching experience to design a course. (11.1.1.3) I think you have to care about who the student is in an institution like Athabasca University. I think you've got to at least be the kind of person to whom that becomes important. (11.1.1.)

Energy. And smiling. I'll never hire people who don't smile during interviews. If they don't laugh during an interview, I'm not interested. I mean, I deliberately try and create an environment in which people can smile. But if they don't, then I have a problem. It's not simply a clever test that

> I've designed as a psychologist, it's a statement that people can, even in difficult circumstances, smile and laugh either at others or at themselves. So when I'm looking for energy, I'm looking for some confidence in themselves and a willingness to open their minds to some new possibilities. I could say I'm looking for an investment in research or education, but I'm not actually. I'm looking for energy. As far as other criteria, I think you either have qualifications or you don't. And you're going to use them. You're going to use your energy in a way that's comfortable for you. And I can't make people find those energies -- I can only create a climate in which some choices can be made. (9.1.3.3)

The above accounts are alike in that they recognize a level of objective criteria which can be applied to most academic applicants such as "excellent academic track record", "completion of graduate degrees and publications", and "teaching ability". As well, each of these respondents reported that attitude is an important criteria in some connection to the hiring process. Terms such as "collegiality"; "alive, flexible, open"; "energy and smiling"; "somebody who cares" -- all point to personal qualities applicants may bring to a particular job or to any life endeavor. The major differences in reports is the emphasis and priority placed on objective and subjective criteria. While at least one respondent would take objective credentials as an assumed prerequisite to achieving an interview, others would appear to weigh academic accomplishments and background throughout the selection process.

It may also be significant to note when considering the differing agendas of hiring committee members that one of the interviewees quoted above was relatively adamant about the requirement that applicants had taken the time and trouble to read the Calendar and to understand something about the University and its role in post-secondary education. This would appear to suggest that acceptable applicants should take a proactive role in assessing the circumstances of their proposed employment before undertaking an interview. Other respondents did not report that the level of an applicant's knowledge and understanding of the organization was an issue in the hiring process.

Moreover, the speaker in the first account is quite specific in detailing differences between traditional academic role behaviors and distance education academic responsibilities that may not be familiar to in-coming faculty. He mentions orientation to students, sensitivity to the concept of adult and/or distance education, the ability to organize time and work-flow independently, and awareness of the over-all post-secondary area.

In the first excerpt, the speaker seems willing to accept a "qualified" academic with the intention of molding him or her into a distance education faculty member. The third account appears to assume the existence of credentials and concentrate on desirable attitudes which will then, presumably, provide the groundwork for forging a productive employee. However, the second respondent would seem to seek a middle ground in which the employee will come to the university possessed of educational background, experience and attitudes which are in the middle bands of the continuum. This would suggest the search for faculty who will be neither subversive to or deviant from a delicate existing balance.

The clash of criteria can be seen most clearly in the account given by one respondent as he commented on the hiring of another respondent:

> Wayne Miller called a meeting. There was a committee to hire a (social scientist). . . . I don't remember why it wasn't going well. At any rate, George and I both got a call to come and sit in on the committee meeting and meet the three candidates they had selected. . . . They [the committee] were favoring their candidate (Jake was the other candidate by the way, the short list was down to two). I said, "Why are you favoring this [other] guy? He's arrogant. I personally find him very patronizing and condescending". They said that doesn't remove from his excellent academic track record. I asked if they wanted to hire that kind of person because he has a publication track record? Is that the only reason you want to bring a person to AU? Or do you want something more? Like somebody who knows how to get along with people, who cares, and has an academic track record, and has good potential for development as a professional at this place". I said something like that. Well, that didn't go over too well, but it sure as hell broke it loose. We ended up hiring Jake. (1.1.2.2)

This account refers to yet another criteria that can be held by a member of a hiring committee -- personal warmth and caring. Yet it is apparent that qualities such as "academic track record" are not overlooked, but are intermingled with more humanistic concerns which can be significant to satisfactory group functioning.

The selection interview was not recalled in much depth by the key informants. However, in the majority of instances, there was at least one detail that was recalled with some emotion. For one respondent, the issue connected her personal life and her professional life.

> I think it was just the same as the typical hiring process that goes on around here. There's a committee set up for each position. Advertisements are sent out, applications received and scrutinized. A short list is drawn up. People are invited to come for a full-day interview. The interview itself was just like all the others. A panel of five people or so. Then a discussion with Personnel and a short paper which was presented to any interested coordinators. I think the other applicants were driven up to Athabasca for a day, and I wasn't. I can't remember exactly why. Probably because I was already in Edmonton. Oh, God. I wrote my paper while rocking my daughter in a little rocking chair. It was the worst paper I've ever written. (3.1.1.2)

An effort was made by another respondent to clarify his position and his credentials with the hiring committee, particularly in light of the impact of the relocation of Athabasca University.

> Now when I think back on that interview it was awful. That's a hindsight observation. At the time I thought it was rather good. It reflected the fact that I was rusty. I had forgotten what academics were like. As I look back on it, there were four people on the committee, but the only two who had questions were David and George. It didn't strike me at the time. In that interview we talked steadily, between the three of us mostly, for three hours. I honestly can't remember too much. Other than I remember David and his restlessness and asking questions which I always seemed able to

> answer. George was sold before the interview started, and I don't remember what he asked. The only thing I remember was at the end of the interview, vaguely, somebody saying, "We're in transition", or something like that. "This has been a tough place with confrontation and conflict", something like that. And I don't know why, but I did say, "I've been in tough working conditions all my career, but I've always been able to function out of who I am, as opposed to knuckling under. I don't knuckle under. If I see myself getting crushed by something and I figure I can't withstand that, then I leave, believing that the better part of valor is to retreat". I remember saying, "You have the references there. Carefully check me out. You've seen how I behaved while talking to you. You've formed impressions. Now carefully check me out. I'm not hiding anything. I haven't carefully coached references to give you a line of whatever kind. My former bosses are on my list as well as my former professors". And I don't know if they did that. (1.1.1.5 - 1.1.6)

Physical problems virtually obliterated recall of the interview as recalled by a third respondent, but not the acrimony that surrounded the hiring procedures.

> It was about that time that I had the heart attack. When the competition came up I applied. I went to the interview and I couldn't remember anything. My mind wouldn't work. It came down to me and another fellow, although there were about 50 applicants for the job. They phoned a fellow at [another university] who had been in my department, and who in fact had been one of my advisors. He said, "Cooper is your average minimally competent [academic]. But this other fellow has the potential to be a world class [social scientist]". Well, that really appealed to [an executive] who tends to be an elitist anyway. So they called in the rest of the social science department to help them make a decision. [One member] and the others spoke up and said, "We don't want this other fellow. He's a cold fish. We want Cooper". They still couldn't make a decision, so they took it to [a more senior executive] who said, "The evidence is clear. Give the job to Cooper". (6.2.1.3)

Yet another respondent, who did not wish to be quoted directly on the matter, indicated that although his interview was basically straightforward, he had made it clear to the search committee that he had no interest in doing disciplinary research. He would rather confine his research activities to those matters that affected the way in which his discipline interacted with distance education. Since that time he has acted upon the assumption that a mutual agreement concerning research responsibilities existed between himself and the university. However, he does not know for certain, for as he said, "It dawned on me later that that might have been against the rules of the University at the time. I didn't realize that".

In the above passages, the "memorable" incident appeared to relate to some aspect of the employment interview which could have thrown their professional ability or integrity into question. The selection interview tends to be stressful for the interviewee who is aware of being judged. The interviewee strives to satisfy the interviewer without revealing too much. As Stewart and Cash (1982:28) point out, "interviews deal with our behavior, our job performance, our reputation, our decisions, our feelings, our loss, our money, and our future -- not some distant or remote person, problem or decision". Thus, interviewees' egos, if not their very future, is on the line.

Memorable incidents, in these reports, related to worrisome perceptions of how respondents felt they were perceived by colleagues. One spoke of "the worst paper I ever gave", another of asking to be "carefully checked out" as one who "functioned out of who I am", a third of being called "a minimally competent scholar, and a fourth a fear of breaking the rules that govern academic activity at a particular institution. Each incident involved concerns about academic or professional integrity, while each pointed to individual beliefs, attitudes, and values that represent an intimate area of inquiry, which calls for a high level of self-disclosure.

The academics submitting the above accounts were those who had been credentialed and employed in the academic area for some period of time -- perhaps indicating a different perspective on academic employment and the fragility of professional status. The individual whose employment at Athabasca University was his first full academic position reported his employment interview to be less stressful and more promising.

> It's hard for me to say whether that was a standard interview or not 'cause I'm not sure what goes on in a standard interview. I guess I was quite interested and pleased after having come out of the interview process. There was the interview in the morning. Then I gave a paper in the afternoon. Then ~~I~~ was taken around and sort of given the tour, and shown Athabasca University and what it does. One, it's a very small place and they were looking for somebody to essentially start their [academic] department. It was a chance to be a bigger fish in

> a little pond -- a very small pond. So that was very interesting. A chance to start a department or a group of courses. And the amount of freedom you have! I listed the two or three courses I'd be most interested in developing. And they sort of said, "Yes, well that sounds like a pretty good idea too". (2.1.1.2)

There is a positive and buoyant note to the above report. However, the majority of reports on interviews for a position at Athabasca University tended to be viewed as "straightforward" or "just like all the others". The "memorable" incidents reported by some respondents may have had some element of trauma. In this respect, it is interesting to note that three reports told in the "memorable" event with no apparent connection to the preceding or succeeding remarks. Rather, they appeared to burst forth as private vignettes.

Interviews as Harbingers

As recalled by the key informants, the employment interviews appeared to have set a tone for the ensuing relationship between the organization and the employee. For some members, this activity was seen as a straightforward exchange which would seem to characterize the interaction carried forth to the present time.

For others, issues which arose from the interview process have continued as troublesome areas in the on-going relationship between the employee and employer. One informant who has subsequently attempted to receive recognition for the status he perceives himself to hold noted:

> I was considered an associate level and had been doing research a good 10 to 15 years (often at full time). I was given an assistant professor rating. The University chose to completely ignore my research background and community consulting experience. Since the [administrator] was so strongly supporting the other candidate, I decided it would not be a time to dicker. There were no other jobs open in Canada. They had something like 100 applicants for this one. (6.1.3.1)

The need for a job seems to have over-ridden the ability of the academic quoted above to negotiate employment terms he perceived suitable to his credentials and experience. He reports that this recognition experience was a blow to his understanding of his professional standing and to his self-esteem. As well, the interview exchange helped set the environment for continued dissension between the organization and the individual -- each party attempting to justify the original stance. This point will be discussed further in later sections.

Academic placement was a problem for another respondent who subsequently found it difficult to describe criteria by which his standing was evaluated.

> I was hired as a full professor because I was a senior person. That's what I bought. . . . I found out, in hindsight, that the general custom across universities, is that when you ask someone to come in as a full professor, you give them tenure. That's normal practice. I didn't know that at the time. (1.1.2.8)

In the above extract, the academic concerned appeared to have been able to negotiate satisfactory tenure arrangements as a condition of hiring, but neglected to do so out of lack of knowledge of accepted procedures. Wanous (1980) warns that lack of open and honest exchange during job previews can result in dissatisfaction in the ensuing relationship between employee and employer. As will be seen later, this breakdown in the initial communication between organization and member would be a source of continuing tension between the parties concerned.

Reasons for Taking the Job

As noted earlier, an important factor for academics seeking contact with Athabasca University was the perceived need for a job or a change of position. Historically, for the academic, the job should be one which has a measure of security, status, and prestige (Wilson, 1942); is predicated on presocialization experience (Mortimer and Simons, 1978); and reflects an individual's conceptions of their expertise (Schein, 1978). A tenure-track position within an accredited university, supported by public funds, usually offers such an employment profile.

The search for a tenure-track appointment can be difficult. One respondent noted:

> Trying for 10 years to get a job and not getting it! Of course it took my confidence away. Year after year of applying for tenure-track jobs. When I applied for this job, I quite self-consciously determined that someone else would get it. (3.2.2.3) I think that at this stage, academics don't have much choice about where they are. I didn't choose Athabasca University over anything else. I wasn't in a position to choose. I took the job because it was available. Not thinking that this is awful, but I'll have to put up with it. I took it very happily. But the fact of the matter is that I didn't choose it over anything else. I think a lot of us are in that position. We live in a time when one doesn't have those choices. My recollection is that things started to close down in the early 70's, so I don't think that many people had, like, three job offers and chose this one. (3.1.2.3 - 1.2.4)

Although job necessity was a major theme among the respondents, other factors played important roles in ultimate job selection. For example, the investment of the time, effort, and costs involved in achieving a PhD have significant implications for maximizing the salary potential of that credential.

As well, for those who pursue a liberal education there is often direct utility only in teaching or research (Wilson, 1942). Thus, continuation of these studies into graduate school often means a life of commitment to academic work. Two viewpoints: one from an academic whose background is mainly in university-level teaching, the other whose employment has focused more on research:

> The only way to be involved in my discipline and earn a living is to work in a university, I mean other than waiting tables or something like that. But I have never been career-oriented, truly. I'm not interested in moving up in the ranks or anything like that. This was an opportunity for me to interact with students and do develop in my discipline. (3.1.2.3) It was the subject area that attracted me, and still does. I've never regretted the choice. (3.2.1.3) I think that at this stage academics don't have much choice about where they are. I didn't choose Athabasca University over anything else. I wasn't in a position to choose. I took the job because it was available. Not thinking that this is awful but I'll have to put up with it. I took it very happily. But the fact of the matter is that I didn't choose it over anything else. I think a lot of us are in that position. We live in a time when one doesn't have those choices. (3.1.2.3)

> I had an offer to do some work (with a government agency). I took a look at the [policies of the current government] and decided that they wouldn't allow the information that I presented them as a consultant to be printed and circulated--it was

> against their policies. And that position is simply untenable with [Professional Association] ethics which do not allow for information to be bottled up. . . . I decided that I could make more impact through written work, and although I had left academia, that seemed the place to be. Besides, when one approaches 40, you want to be warm. I was tired of crunching around in the snow. (6.2.1.2)

Difficulty in finding tenure-track appointments in a university may be somewhat dependent upon the area of discipline. The respondents noted above have expertise in the humanities and social sciences area. The respondents who had a quantitative science background did not report the same level of difficulty. A respondent who has credentials which are in scarce supply and significant demand commented:

> I'm not too sure if there were other applicants for the job. I don't think there are many potential candidates around with my credentials. And I also had a list of publications of previous work. (5.1.1.7)

A second respondent from a qualitative discipline also voiced his relative independence from being limited to a single job offer:

> I picked the move back west because the salary was a little bit better. I was contemplating going into business at the time. When I was sitting back east, I was trying to imagine what type of place it would be where I was going, to work with a bunch of people who, as far as I knew, had just been chained and dragged up to the town of Athabasca. I assumed from that that it must be just an absolute horror show, a real zoo, with a lot of people back-stabbing and knee-biting. And I really came with the attitude that I was just going to take a look around, see what was going on, make sure I was on the payroll every day. Had the idea that I could put up with anything on the short run as long as I was being paid, and saving a bit of money --

> that if it didn't work out, I could just go elsewhere. (4.1.1.7)

The academics cited above may or may not have had competition for the position. However, whatever other applicants there might have been would not have approached the scale of potential candidates reported by a previous respondent who indicated that there were about "50 others" to choose from.

The theme of physical and psychological comfort was introduced by the informant who "was tired of crunching around in the snow". It was echoed by those respondents who spoke of location as a contributing factor in the decision to take the job at Athabasca University. Two respondents were native Albertans whose careers had taken them to other areas:

> ...I was down in [the southern states] which became a three-year period. Come the third year, we were anxious to get back to Canada. We were missing the four seasons. That's what happens to Canadians down there. (1.1.1.4)
>
> Our move back here was also partly based on family. When we were down there and both single, it was fine. When we had our first daughter, we started thinking of people like grandmas and grandpas, uncles and aunts. So we were looking for a way back. (4.1.1.4)

A third member, who was not an Albertan, also found family part of his consideration.

> I have a brother who lives just outside of Edmonton, and they just had a baby. I thought, well, if the

> University is interested in me then I can get a chance to meet that little baby. (2.1.1.1)

For the other respondents, who lived in the Edmonton-Athabasca region, the opportunity for employment with Athabasca University was satisfactory because it did not necessitate a move from their home base. However, location would eventually become a problem for most new staff members, as will be discussed in a later section.

A fourth major theme in determining job choice was perceptions of being able to contribute to the work of Athabasca University. The respondent who had once been a tutor took a proactive role in her hiring:

> As a tutor, I lobbied to have the University establish a position in my disciplinary area because I thought it was a dreadful lack for a university to offer a Bachelor of Arts degree with no such courses even offered. Well, obviously, they saw this as a problem, and eventually a position was established. (3.1.1.1)

Jake also had a vested interest in the academic position he was eventually hired to:

> I came to Athabasca University first as a term appointment to write a couple of credits. When they had a competition for a permanent position, I applied and got that one. (6.1.1.2)

The opportunity to contribute to the on-going work of Athabasca University was suggested by a third informant who added to his account of the attraction he felt in being offered an opportunity of developing a department or group of courses in the area of his expertise while advancing his personal professional goals.

> A major consideration at the time was, they said "It usually takes about two years to prepare a course". It seemed like an exceptionally generous amount of time. Which meant that I would have a fair amount of time left over for working on my thesis. It was mostly because of those considerations and because they offered me the job, that I decided to take it. (2.1.1.2)

Athabasca University's mandate also played a part in decision making for the majority of informants. A typical comment:

> I think that the idea of distance education also interested me. I believed in the stated mission of AU to provide educational opportunities to people at the time and place of their convenience. And I believed in the social value of that. So it was easy for me to have a real commitment in an ethical sense to the institution. (5.1.1.3)

A final major theme referring to the over-all desirability of the academic life-style ran through most of the interviews, but was directly addressed by only one member:

> The answer is, I just like the hours. I like being able to work when I want to work, stop when I want to stop--the normal advantages that are associated with that. Not having to wear a suit when I don't feel like it, which is most days. And I just find the pace of life better, even when I'm working hard. I like the pace better than a 9-5 routine. (4.1.1.4)

Summary

The reasons for accepting a position at Athabasca University were varied. Job necessity and the desirability of the general location topped the list. Other factors to which some importance were attached were the mission of the University and the general attractiveness of the academic life-style.

Expectations

Both the organization and the newcomer form expectations concerning their future association. Newcomers attempt to assess the demands of the new position and altered life-style and their abilities to be able to cope with these changes (Wanous, 1980; Louis, 1980). The organization, from its point of view, has specific needs it expects the newcomer to address. The ability of new recruits to meet these initial expectations will affect their subsequent success with the particular organization (Berlew and Hall, 1966).

Depending upon such intertwined variables as past experiences, roles, and reference groups, individuals will attempt to make sense of an anticipated work situation (Van Maanen, 1977b:16). As individuals position themselves to establish new behaviors, relationships and responsibilities, they attempt to reformulate everyday assumptions about working life. However, the trend to maintain homeostasis (or the status quo) suggests that individuals will resist accepting the necessary levels of change. Rather than consciously breaking with past behaviors and putting learned attitudes and actions behind them, individuals will tend to over-lay expected new roles upon relatively comfortable past roles as they search for common-sense theories to make meaningful the myriad of activities that are beginning to occur. Thus, expectations of the new work place tend to be highly colored by previous performances.

At an average age of 47 years, and with a considerable accumulation of training and experience, participants in this study felt that they had quite clear expectations of taking on the role of faculty members within a university context. One informant noted:

> If you've been teaching at the U. of A. and you move to the U. of T., you just keep right on. There's no learning process really involved in how you're going to do research and prepare for your courses (10.1.1.10)

The above excerpt points to the paradigmatic view academics appear to develop of the processes of the professional role as experienced and processed over the years. These activities would appear to relate to the "easing-in" to role behaviors and attitudes through extensive modeling and practice in previous institutional experiences as discussed by Corcoran and Clark (1984). "Easing-in" does not appear to provide a strong basis for anticipating requirements at a distance education university. For example, anticipating what academic life might be like without students on campus did not turn out as expected for one of the informants:

> Having read the Calendar and having gone to the interview, I was prepared -- I knew as well as an outsider could -- what I was getting into. I had the initial attitude that because we weren't running around and teaching classes and racing to get things

> ready for class all the time, that I would have endless time to quickly develop an endless number of courses. I'm still learning. (4.1.1.10)

The demands of course production did not appear to conform to the expectations of some incoming academics at Athabasca University, although this did not seem to be an anticipated difficulty in the beginning. As one respondent noted:

> They told me I'd have to write courses. I thought, "O.K. I can write courses." In hindsight, that was a mistake. (6.3.4.6)

Several informants expressed their lack of anticipation for the rigors of course production, as opposed to the activities of preparing for a series of lectures and evaluation procedures. In addition, the general level of work to be accomplished was not anticipated. For example, a respondent spoke of her surprise at the volume of work to be done, although she had been warned of this factor prior to taking the position.

> There's a lot more busy work. Just an incredible amount of busy work. Well, I'd heard about it. (3.1.1.3)

For at least one respondent, the opportunities for educational experiences offered by emerging technologies were a drawing card. This academic anticipated that Athabasca University would offer a variety of pedagogical methodologies supported by high-tech components.

> The personal computer, coupled with the advent of cheap multi-user online systems, plus the drop in

> cost of data transmission: I thought that AU should be at the forefront of this kind of activity -- which turned out to be a very bitter disappointment to me. It isn't, wasn't, and may never be! (5.1.1.2)

A distance education university would appear to offer unequaled scope to the applications of technology to learning. However, high-tech applications have been limited (although certainly not absent) at Athabasca University for three main reasons: (1) the scarcity of technically proficient academic personnel, (2) budget constraints, and (3) both the general lack of technical equipment available to the population at large and the unsettled, competing formats of the technology that is available.

Of the individuals contributing to the data in this study, the academic quoted above alone suggested that he had some particular expertise to bring to Athabasca University. The opportunity to contribute his talents to the unique features of the organization formed part of his reasons for applying and his expectations of his future role. Of course, the others recognized that their training and knowledge made them eligible to meet the job description, perhaps with the notion that job requirements were not significantly different than they might be at any university. This academic, however, anticipated that he could apply his skills particularly well in the venue of a distance education institution. He goes on:

> All through the years, right from the beginning, I've had a scientific, technical, mathematical orientation. So that I view my role in innovation as the use of technologies to possibly improve distance education -- improve the delivery and the evaluation and the tracking and the management in distance education. (5.1.1.2)

As well as the notion of bringing a particular grouping of abilities to develop the educational capabilities of Athabasca University, this academic also sees his role as that of an innovator. None of the other key informants noted the opportunity to innovate, either within their disciplines or within the concept of distance education, as forming part of their goals or expectations in their relationship with Athabasca University.

Budget constraints were a problem to new academics on more than the technological level. During a faculty meeting a newcomer who had been with the university for less than a year remarked"

> What I want to know is what happened to all the money. I was told there was lots of money. Anything you wanted you asked for. When I was interviewed I was told there was lots of money for a library, and when you are going to do research, you need a good library. (13.1.8)

One of the key informants, representing the views of others, also comments on this abrupt change.

> I guess another first impression was that there was a real sense when I showed up a year and a half ago, that the place still had money to burn. That has changed. But having moved out of an environment where money was very tight -- I had just finished

> going through a bitter strike having to do with tight money and that type of thing -- it was a pleasant surprise to run across a place where if someone said, "We need an extra three-hole punch", there was a reasonable chance of getting it. I wasn't used to that. That was one of my little projects down east -- I tried for three and a half years to requisition a three-hole punch and failed. (4.1.1.9)

Although the above excerpts relate to unmet or overly-high expectations, there was also some reference to having expectations met or exceeded. An example of a met expectation:

> It was fairly clear what the requirements were, and I found most of it to be enjoyable and interesting to do. (2.1.1.7)

An exceeded expectation concerned the building which houses Athabasca University.

> I like this office space and was surprised. When I was at [a college], I had a very nice office. When I went to [another college] I had horrid office conditions, to the point where I did all my work at home. So I was surprised to have the nice space that was actually set up for people working. (As long as the air conditioning is on, the environment is good, etc.) I just found, for example, that looking out at the bush after spending time looking out at freeways, to be quite pleasant and appealing. When you're in the building here, you're not really in Athabasca. You're off on your own. This could be Omaha. It doesn't matter where you are, you're just inside a sealed room. (4.1.1.7 - 1.1.8)

The respondent cited above did not come to Athabasca University with high expectations. Indeed, he experience some relief that Athabasca University offered a more stable environment than the "zoo" he had anticipated. He reports:

> One thing that really struck me at first -- I don't know what you'd call it -- lack of action, or lack of bustle as far as the work environment goes. I was thinking two things at once. The obvious one was there were no students. I was prepared for that, but I wasn't prepared not to have most of the staff around most of the time. (4.1.1.9)

Although the data is not specific concerning the ultimate effect that met, unmet, and inflated expectations had on eventual job satisfaction, the trend would appear to indicate that unmet expectations invoked a rather emotional response in the recall of most of the informants. The terms "bitter disappointment", "a mistake in hindsight", "I wouldn't have come" seem to indicate that for some new faculty members the role of an academic at Athabasca University has been less fulfilling than might have been expected.

Some administrators at Athabasca University are aware of the difficulties that face academic newcomers. An administrator stated his concern for the socialization process experienced by the newcomer which have implications for the functioning of the organization:

> It takes such a long time to adjust. It is different, very different. There is just no way somebody can just walk in and feel instantly comfortable. It is a major adjustment, a major reorientation. And I figure it takes a good year, even with the really bright people who get in right away. (11.1.2.4)

The length of time it takes the typical new academic at Athabasca University to "get up to speed" is a continuing concern to the organization (Paul, 1987). It is likely that recognition of this difficulty was, in part, the cause of a recent change in Athabasca Faculty Association Terms and Conditions to extend the probationary period from two years to four. The extended period gives both the individual and the University a longer period in which to assess their mutual compatibility.

The organization makes some effort to alert prospective candidates to the role variances they can anticipate before commencing employment. A report from one administrator:

> I make sure that they realize when they come in here that they are going to have responsibilities which, while similar to the academic's role at a traditional university, are somewhat different. And primarily, I'm talking about the coordination and the delivery. I make sure that they know that they can live without face-to-face contact with students on a daily basis. Now we do have ways in which we ensure that there is some contact--there is enhanced* delivery to students--but it's the exception, not the norm. So anybody who needs that to regenerate, has to know that's not what they're getting here.
>
> They will have as much time to do research as at the U. of A., or any other university, but what they won't have is a block of time in which to do it. During a [regular] term you would. I mean, we're always in term here.
>
> So the difference at the U. of A. is that you have four months, the summer months, when you can

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* Enhanced delivery refers to the special arrangements for a print-based package of learning materials to be used with a designated group through paced seminar delivery or teleconference.

> concentrate on your research. Here we're getting closer to that -- here we're at two-and-a-half** months now where people can take block time. But the remaining time, I would suggest that they have more time for research than at any other institution, during the term. But, what they don't have, is the block time. So it's again a question of being able to organize themselves well.
>
> I think I try and make sure that they realize that because it's a small institution, they're expected to give more to the academic atmosphere, the climate of the institution, than they might at a larger institution. . . . (10.1.1.7 - 1.1.8)

This administrator recognizes at least some of the challenges that must be faced by the incoming faculty member, and makes some effort to present a realistic account of the actual job requirements which may be different than traditional academics would anticipate. In particular, he appears concerned with acquainting newcomers with the particular demands of presenting courses to distance education students, with the absence of a student body with whom they might interact on a regular basis, with the importance of the research requirement and how that job component may be accomplished in a distance education setting, with their responsibility to a new, small institution and with the importance of time management and individual pacing.

However, phrases such as "coordination and delivery", "lack of face-to-face contact", "we're always in term here", "blocks of time", and "small institution" may not have as much meaning for those who had not experienced the constraints of these strictures until much later when they have lived with the reality.

Nor are paths to achieve full professional status clearly enunciated, perhaps in some effort to respond to the initiative that academics are assumed to bring to their tasks:

> The goals we set up for academics are very vague. The actual goal is there, but how you get to it is not there. (10.1.1.8)

The above comment would appear to indicate a great deal of latitude incoming academics have to learn their role as well as to organize and execute their work load. Given the traditional protection of university faculty from external control over or inquiry into their teaching methods and the research topics they choose to investigate, (Olswang and Lee, 1984) such freedom is understandable and even laudable. However, as tasks and accountabilities may be quite different in a distance education institution, more structure may be required in assisting newcomers in "learning the ropes".

As predicted by Van Maanen (1977a) and others, unmet expectations tend to be a source of continuing dissatisfaction for new organizational members. The majority of the informants cited in this study appeared to anticipate a faculty role which would not vary substantially from other models they had been exposed to. Further, the accounts suggest that the reality was somewhat different than anticipated. In particular, respondents reported misjudging time allocations, the complexity of writing courses, the volume of administrative duties, the relative lack of technological sophistication, and the perceived lack of professional status and measurement criteria for academic ranks.

Fewer met expectations were cited, perhaps due to the theory that when expectations are met they cease to be dissatisfiers and tend to correlate positively with mental health (Handy, 1985). Thus, the work environment, clear statements of organizational expectations, and lack of overt conflict with internal and external agencies, may have been psychologically processed during the beginning months of employment and ceased to be a focus of recall.

In order to establish realistic expectations, at least some administrators at Athabasca University make some effort to apprise the faculty candidate of job specifics which might differ from the operations of a more traditional university. Realistic job previews have been strongly proposed by some organizational theorists such as Wanous (1980). However, the data in this study would appear to suggest that the information new academic staff received about the job before employment did not substantially alter their paradigmatic views of academic life and faculty roles. Realization of the scope and area of change came only after on-the-job experience.

Entry

The step from accepted candidate to new person in the organization marks another transition in the socialization process. In this phase the newcomer crosses an organizational boundary from outsider to insider (Schein, 1968). At Athabasca University that boundary is not very permeable in regards to faculty. Generally, the process of selecting an entrant is somewhat rigorous as the ensuing relationship is at the core of the institution's functioning.

However, once selected, the task of becoming a productive insider begins for the newcomer. Individuals undergoing any organizational transition are in an anxiety-producing situation. (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) As routines for handling tasks, interactions, the environment, and responses to others are unknown, newcomers are faced with becoming acquainted with the requirements of their new situation. As Van Maanen (1977b:16) observed, "to the newly recruited the organization is alien territory, full of surprises".

Change in Living Conditions

For some of the new academic staff at Athabasca University, the change in actual physical territory or location constituted their first surprises.

> My wife was about four months pregnant when I came out here. She came out a couple of months later. We found the winters very long and cold. I came in October with a suitcase and a bicycle. Three days later the snow fell and stayed until April. I was a little unprepared for that! (2.1.1.2)

The respondent cited above likely found the bicycle useless during the ice and snow of a northern Alberta winter and the suitcase of clothes inadequate protection from the often frigid temperatures. Yet the transition did not appear too difficult for him. He comments further:

> But we really enjoy living in Edmonton now. . . . There's quite a bit around in the way of music and theatre. It's such a nice easy city to get around in. We miss (our home town), but it's probably more missing friends and family than the amenities of a large city, aside from a favorite Indian restaurant or two. (2.1.1.3)

One person who moved to the town of Athabasca also found the initial transition relatively easy, although he and his family were to make other adjustments in living arrangements as the realities of small town living over an extended period of time became more difficult. His first reaction:

> My wife and I had this conversation numerous times. We were really shocked at how easy the transition was. And we couldn't figure out why, coming from having lived in a metro area of two to three million people. We found it relatively easy to make the initial transition. There was no shock at all in dealing with western Canada except maybe a bit of recognition of things we'd forgotten. And some recognition or validation for leaving in the first place. (4.1.1.4)

The relative ease of the physical transition made by this faculty member and his wife was likely affected by fact that they had both lived in the general area during their growing-up years. Some things would come as no surprise such as the severity and length of the winters, and prevalent cultural patterns, although particular details and emphasis may have blurred in their memories over time.

A third academic who made the move from Edmonton to Athabasca, found the transition added a general sense of stress.

> Part of it was moving such a short distance. If you move 2,000 miles, then you cut your ties and that's that. But if you move eight miles then you feel caught in between sometimes. I've lived here for two years, and I'm still up and down. (3.1.1.8)

The academic quoted above found her physical relocation difficult in part, because her orientation is toward the larger community of scholars. In addition, many important aspects of her friendships and relationships are based outside of the town of Athabasca, and the relatively short distance between locations was not sufficient to sever those bonds and create new ones. It might be anticipated, however, that lack of proximity would eventually weaken relationships, resulting either in further isolation or another adaptational response.

The situation was very different for two other academics who made a similar move from the city of Edmonton to the Athabasca area. Both are outdoorsmen who were not attracted to the constraints of city life, which made the move to a relative wilderness area more attractive. A colleague said of one of these faculty members, "When we were in Edmonton (he) seemed out of place with his cowboy boots, pipe, and folksy ways. Now he fits right in. In fact, he epitomizes the area." (15.1.1.3) Interestingly, neither of these academics mentioned the impact of the physical move as it applied to their considerations during the course of the interviews. Yet in informal conversation both have spoken in glowing and enthusiastic terms of their life-styles and their places of residence.

First Days on the Job

At the time of the hiring of most of the academics who were key informants in this study, the University was in the process of relocating to the town of Athabasca. The institutional upset was reflected in the initiation into faculty life experienced by these academics. One respondent discovered that he was not wanted in the midst of the confusion.

> It was a bit of an uproar because I arrived right in the middle of their moving. I was sort of told "Come back in a few weeks". So I went away and found a place to stay and came back a few weeks later. (2.1.1.3)

This respondent laughed as he recalled his first "non-days" on the job. One of the other informants also had "non-first days" which she found amusing.

> Well, those two days were the first and second of August, 1984. And by an utter quirk of fate, I was tutoring five (tutor) blocks, and so I took the job on the understanding that I would not do anything in my first month as a coordinator other than tutor. (Laughter) [Athabasca University officially moved September 1, 1984] So, you know, life is just a series of crises, right? Just continues that way. (3.2.1.5)

The previous two respondents entered into positions where there were on-going courses to be managed and delivered. Although the jobs they occupied were newly created, courses had been developed in their areas and were being delivered by other coordinators (the previous official designation of professorial staff). Only one academic in the key informant group had no initial course delivery responsibilities. He found himself in what he considered to be a favorable position.

> When I first started, I just sat down and made up a schedule. I looked over the outline, and it didn't take me very long to decide I was going to have so many lessons. I decided I wanted to get it done by a certain date -- which I won't even mention now, it's so far in the past, and of course still isn't done. But, I was, for example, going along about a lesson a week. For a while I didn't learn that it took a lot longer because people left me alone because I was new. Nobody asked me to do all the other things you end up doing around an institution like this, and I actually did get to spend the first few months doing nothing but just work on that course. I'd come in in the morning, and I'd work all day. And I thought I was actually getting a lesson a week done. That course still isn't finished! (4.1.2.1)

Clearly, the respondent quoted above found his initial freedom to structure his job held future drawbacks in terms of understanding and dealing with the complexity of the total task. However, he did have the advantage of immersing himself in one aspect of the job to be done without the many other responsibilities that comprise the academic's role.

Meeting Other Staff Members

People within an organization can be powerful sources of influence in confirming one's organizational identity and creating a context for positive work relationships (Katz and Kahn, 1978) First impressions were very positive for some key informants but were later altered as the situation became more familiar. For one respondent, people were the key to his entry experiences:

> When I first came to AU? That was exciting. Mostly because of the way things went and have continued to go with George. (1.1.1.7)

There appeared to be satisfaction in a one-on-one relationship for this respondent. However, the group at large posed different problems according to his perceptions:

> I quickly became aware of how people really didn't talk to one another. It was the end of the wars between editors and course developers. It wasn't yet quite the end of the wars between I.D.s and course developers and I.D.s and editors. They were separate units then. I was appalled by the ignorance -- the pretentiousness of it all -- the

> way people tend to develop excellent rationalizations of what they do and what they don't do. I very quickly, and without apology, began to talk about the way we were being run by a bunch of snot-nosed kids out of grad school who've never been anywhere and haven't done anything, but they don't know it. More than once. Which didn't endear me.
>
> There was no wisdom, no tolerance, no compassion: in my regard generally, and toward each other as I looked around. Abby and Edward never talked to each other. They sent each other memos. They wouldn't even have thought of talking to each other. Managers sent memos to each other, and they were just 10 feet apart from each other. That sort of nonsense. In hindsight, it was no good to have gotten mad because all of these people just don't know how to relate. Mind you, it's changing. (1.1.2.1)

The disciplinary area of this respondent may have influenced his view of the University as a new faculty member. Through his work he is acutely aware of individual and group processes. In addition, he holds a senior staff designation and has had extensive experience in a variety of organizational settings which may have presented him with alternative models of organizational functioning. Awareness of interdepartmental conflict, reliance on formal communication methods, and the relative youth and inexperience of managers are featured in this academic's narrative. Yet he was not alone in finding a lack of strong interpersonal relationships. For example:

> I guess I found the place incredibly negative. I found that people had a tendency not to treat each other as professionals, not to exist in a well-developed network of colleagues, who, through doing research, communicating with each other, and going to meetings and giving papers [create a scholarly community]. There was a kind of distance education mythology which worked against that.

(6.3.1.3)

The focus of the above report is the community of professionals rather than the organizational community. The "distance education mythology" which he refers to appears to relate to each academic working relatively independently as managers of their own areas without developing a cohesive, interrelated faculty, as he expected.

At least one key informant was pleased with the group that he became a member of. His first impressions:

> I certainly found most of the people I met and was working with very friendly and helpful. There is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm around here which is really nice, certainly more than you find at [a previous university]. There you certainly do get the impression that most of the faculty are not very interested in students or teaching -- even graduates, let alone undergraduates. (2.1.1.4)

This individual also appears to contrast the group that he entered with a previous faculty that he had been part of. It would appear that his initial expectations were lower in terms of establishing supportive working relationships and that his subsequent experience at Athabasca University was pleasant for him. As in the instance of this respondent, the negative proponents were more than willing to attest to the talent and ability of their fellow staff members. However, they felt that the atmosphere, in terms of interpersonal interactions, were less than constructive.

Positive initial reactions to the working atmosphere and the people with whom he came in contact were reported by a second academic:

> I found it most exhilarating! I found it a real thrill! I came into an environment where I met a number of congenial professionals, enthusiastic people: some of them enthusiastic about distance learning, about the use of computers. I also found, at least at the time, an environment of forward-looking professionals. I really felt very good about this institution, and I felt very good about working with the computer professionals here. In fact, setting up, while I was still in Athabasca, [before the University's move] on a personal computer in my farmhouse and getting and staying online to the University's computing system I found very interesting and useful. I thought it was just great. I thought that I had succeeded in retreating to a situation where I would be able to contribute to what I conceived as the way a University should go. Right? (5.1.1.7)

The themes of initial excitement with aspects of the job and pleasure in the people that were met were echoed by several of the informants. Phrases such as, "That was exciting", and "I found a tremendous amount of enthusiasm around here", corroborated the notion of early positive response. Fewer negative responses were reported, but those few were expressed in strong terms.

Personal Complications

Boundary-crossing experiences into the responsibilities of full academic staff membership at Athabasca University co-existed with complicating factors in personal lives. For example, a respondent in the previous section mentioned moving a pregnant wife two and a half thousand miles away from family and friends to establish a home and have their first child. These and other factors made the transition more difficult and stressful than might have been anticipated. Another account:

> The first year here, I nearly quit my job every day. Every single day I almost quit my job. As usual, it was because a lot of different things were going on at once. I had my first and only child. I learned how to drive. I took a trip to Poland and Egypt. I took this job -- all at once. Since I was feeling very isolated academically, I was going to Edmonton a lot, and that took a lot of juggling. I think it was too much. (3.1.1.8)

The first respondent referred to in this section had to "let go" established patterns of home and community and to take on new understandings and behaviors as well as establish himself in a new role in an unknown organization. The second respondent faced life changes: a new job and a move that was not quite a move. The stress must have been considerable for them both as reflected in the comment, "The first year here, I nearly quit my job every day".

The respondent who reported that the interview had been a blur for him due to having recently suffered a heart attack, found the physical disability a continuing problem during his first months with Athabasca University. He stated:

> But I was concerned about course deadlines, so I agreed to check in at the hospital about once a week even though the doctor wanted to hospitalize me. (6.1.1.3)

As transitions typically cause anxiety, the physical problem may have been accentuated for this newcomer by the stress of taking on a new role.

In an even more poignant vein, another academic expressed his feeling of beginning a new organizational life while his marriage was ending:

> My marriage was breaking up. The process of deep change, I think, focuses mostly on the fears that we have, or that I have. It requires a certain letting go. And at that moment there are no reference points. It's something like being locked in a closet and you're suffocating. You have no reference points, you're desperate. It's a normal transition phase of deep change. In a normal setting you would have old people -- elders, teachers, whatever. But when you're busy hammering away at a job, your marriage falling apart, and having to re-identify yourself or reposition yourself, and not having the time to withdraw (which would have been the proper thing to do)...that was the sense of what was going on. And, well, we made it. (1.1.2.3 - 1.2.4)

This last comment may articulate some important processes that are connected with the transition phase of entry into an organization. "Letting go" has been cited by Louis (1980) as being fully as important as "going to". Louis indicates that this process has been overlooked by most writers of socialization activities who tend to ignore the importance of describing and accepting what is no longer useful or productive to a new setting. Some individuals who are undergoing "deep change", such as adapting to information about their imminent death, may never make the transition to acceptance (Kubler-Ross,1981) and thus deny themselves a significant growth opportunity. In an organizational setting, failure to "let go" of behaviors and attitudes that were acceptable and perhaps even rewarded in previous settings may result in conduct which is deemed "deviant" by colleagues, or in turnover (Graen, 1976). Support for this view may be seen in the report by the key informant who experienced conflict in continuing to engage in many of the activities that she did before the job and added the stresses of the job to the life she was already experiencing. The result, for her, was undergoing the additional stress of determining to quit her job "every single day".

Reference points for the academic may be found in previous work experiences which appear to map on to the present circumstance. Thus, building trust relationships in a group setting may have been integral to other employment activities and release from some duties may have made remaining tasks appear more attainable than they were when compared to other employment situations in the post-secondary sector.

The need for supportive others as an aid to making successful transitions is also pointed to by the academic cited above. In most of the instances documented in this section, few teachers or elders were available in a "tribal" sense, in many instances due to living in a new community. Indeed, most of the key informants were separated from support groups, in some cases with spouses and small children also dependent on them.

Finally, the theme of withdrawing in order to reidentify oneself is important. A unique characteristic of human beings is their capacity for self-reflection. Self-reflection assists in assessing meaning and identifying oneself within that emerging concept. When the sheer volume of activity and both sensory and informational input are accelerated through the number of unknown tasks to be performed with and through unknown people in a strange environment, there is very little opportunity for abstract thought or meditation. Thus, an important method of coping with change and transition is unavailable to those who are entering new organizations and embarking upon life changes.

Chapter 6:

LEARNING THE ROPES

The process by which recruits are transformed from outsiders into participating and effective members of organizations is called organizational socialization (Feldman, 1976). This process involves both learning work roles and adapting to a unique cultural setting. Newcomers actually undergo a "multiple socialization process" in which they simultaneously develop skills, values and behavior patterns relevant to the requirements of the employing organization.

The following sections are concerned with the processes by which distance education academics at Athabasca "learned the ropes" or became functioning insiders within the organization. Within this process there are two main foci: the aspects of role acquisition as new academics become familiar with job requirements, skills and behaviors; and, the adaptation to the organizational culture as incoming faculty become aware of the group ethos which defines Athabasca University as a novel institution.

Role Acquisition

The concept of "role" as an aspect of organizational behavior was described by Goffman (1959), who drew an analogy between "real-life situations" and the unfolding of a play on the stage. People in organizations have definite roles to perform which are "acted" by the role performers according to the way they perceive the role, the qualities they bring to the role and the expectations they hold of others (e.g. other actors, audiences, directors).

New job-holders have both a history and an on-going life. Through past experiences they have developed patterns of motives and beliefs about work roles and expectations about new roles to be performed. In the process of living, they have accumulated and an array of other roles and obligations (Katz and Kahn, 1978:217). Upon entering a new organization, the newcomer adds to the accumulation of role behaviors by learning new personal roles as well as the entire system of roles and attitudes that influences the other members of the organization. Role learning, within the complex demands and expectations of an organization, will require new actors to acquire a "role prescription" for their behavior in a particular situation (French et al., 1985; Graen, 1976). This is a basic part of the socialization process.

Roles are defined by French et al. (1985:43) as "the expected behavior patterns for a specific position in a society or organization". Role expectations are sent to the newcomer by the organizational members who have a stake in the person's performance in terms of their own rewards, judgements and performances (Katz and Kahn, 1978). From the symbolic interaction perspective, individuals who are learning roles create meaning and formulate their lines of action. At the same time, actors attempt to take into account the actions of others. Role playing is the ability to become aware of the self as it appears to others (Wexler, 1983). Increasingly, as socialization occurs, the role is taken on as one's own -- not just played.

The role of the academic is typically conceptualized as having tripartate functions -- the conservation, dissemination and innovation of knowledge (Wilson, 1942). These functions include the activities of teaching, research, and community service, to both internal and external communities. Of these functions, that of dissemination, or those activities surrounding the teaching role, typically occupy the majority of faculty time and interest. (Finkelstein, 1984).

In the following section, the acquisition of the teaching function in distance education as perceived by academics at Athabasca University will be considered.

Learning the Teaching Function in Distance Education

As is the case in other universities, (Finkelstein, 1984), the teaching role at Athabasca University encompasses the greatest time commitment for faculty. Although many of the reasons for this focus on teaching activities may be attributable to the personal and professional interests of faculty members, there are also at least two main reasons which are embedded in the structure of an open distance education university.

First, in distance education, teaching is broken down into two activities -- course development/production and course delivery. Course development involves the academic writing of courses (or supervising those written by external consultants), while course production refers to the management of the process through various departments. Contributors to the development process include Instructional Designers, Editors, Visual Designers and sometimes, External Reviewers who are assigned to each course and become known as the "course team". The production process involves such departments as Copyright, Registry, and Media Services which produces the final product after various recyclings through the members.

When the course has been produced, other departments such as Registry, Course Materials, Examinations, Tutorial

Services and Student Services take an active role in delivering the learning product to students. Faculty members are responsible for coordinating the delivery of their courses to external students through institutional processes, assisted by part-time, usually externally based, tutors.

As the development and delivery of distance education courses involves so many of the departments of the university, it can be said that in distance education, the institution teaches. This is a significant difference from the more traditional institutions where academics interact, relatively autonomously, with students. In distance education, the academic teaches in conjunction with the institution, and the joint involvement tends to be continuous and demanding.

The second major reason that the teaching function is a primary user of faculty time at Athabasca University, is that courses are offered on a year-round basis. This means that some students will be entering courses, others proceeding through courses and yet others writing final exams simultaneously throughout the year. Tutor liaison, student concerns and the marking of exams are academic tasks which cannot be set aside for any consecutive period of time. In addition, the university systems produce learning materials and process students with few seasonal variations.

Thus, the faculty member's responsibility to students and course production is an ongoing component of the job requirements.

The next section will discuss the teaching function as perceived by in-coming academics at Athabasca University.

Course Development

The initial task for the new academic at Athabasca University is usually to write a new course, or revise an existing one. At this point in the university's growth very few, if any, academic staff are hired merely to manage existing courses. Rather, the faculty position is created or retained in order to add to program areas or create new ones, or to provide in-house input to the rewriting or revision of dated or non-reproducible courses.

The informants reported their first course production to be a difficult task. In the beginning, many expected that the process would be similar to preparing an outline and lecture notes for in-class presentation. A typical comment:

> I had the initial attitude that because we weren't running around and teaching classes and reacting to get things ready for class all the time that I would have endless time to quickly develop an endless number of courses. I grossly underestimated how much effort was required to just develop a distance ed course. I'd think of the time, for example, I'd spent preparing notes for use in the classroom and made the false assumption that it would be an equal amount of time to prepare a student work book for a distance ed course. It takes ten times as long! (4.1.1.10)

An academic professional, coming from a more traditional class-room based educational institution, might be expected to use prior job activities as a template for predicting job dimensions anticipated in the new work setting. As noted in the quotation above, this academic drew upon his classroom experience to estimate the time and effort involved in course preparation, matched that activity against the time required to meet student needs and concluded that he could accomplish a great deal in a short time under the distance education format. Instead, he discovered that course writing was a more complex and time-consuming task than he had anticipated, more than compensating for the time he might otherwise have awarded to in-house students. The part of the template which provided the academic with guidelines to the amount of effort and to the degree of difficulty in preparing a course for student use proved inadequate for a distance education format. This mismatch of expectations and realities may be a source of considerable stress as new role perceptions are formed.

Why does it take so long to develop a course, and why is course development a difficult task? Key informants offered several reasons.

Difficulties Encountered in Course Development

Several reasons were advanced by the informants to account for difficulty experienced by newcomers preparing a course and the amount of time that is expended on this activity. Among them were the need for academic preparation, acquisition of new skills and the adaptation of attitudes.

Academic preparation was a problem for senior incoming academics who had not dealt with the subject matter for some length of time. As one commented:

> I had to completely re-tool in intro courses. And that process is still going on. (1.1.1.6)

As a young institution searching for external credibility, Athabasca University often hires discipline specialists who are then asked to produce courses in areas no longer familiar to them. An academic illustrates this point:

> Each chapter is a different sub-field of the area. Heck, I don't have a grasp of all those areas. I have to read an enormous amount for each chapter if I want to really place it in context and create a special kind of learning experience. I have to work like a damn. When I did the [first] course, hell, I hadn't worked on that stuff for 20 years. I read just about everything that was relevant. And I worked like crazy synthesizing the thing and then creatively putting it together. Then [an external reviewer] who liked it so much, also gave me, on a couple of chapters, a really heavy-duty criticism. And I went back and read the new stuff and re-wrote the whole thing, because I wanted to make it the very best possible course. (6.1.5.1)

This comment makes two additional points. One is the amount of academic work usually put in to creating a set of educational materials for the distance student who will rely, almost exclusively, on the course content for both the subject matter substance and the enrichment activities which ordinarily may be a by-product of the classroom format. Secondly, this academic highlights the strength of internal motivation to produce "the best possible course". Reasons for self-motivation may include the likelihood that the course will receive external peer review which then reflects on one's academic capabilities, and the knowledge that the course will bear one's name, whatever its academic attributes, during many viewings by colleagues, students, other academic institutions, and interested professionals and non-professionals.

Even those who have recently class-room taught the course they are initially asked to produce in a learning package found the process difficult in terms of the amount of detail required. One related:

> Subject matter's not a problem. I've spent a lifetime learning more about it. But by and large, I know what I need to know to deal with it. Certainly at the introductory level.(4.2.2.2) A few months ago, I was very busy because I was "burning away" trying to get this course done. And I'm actually quite shocked at how much work there is to do once you're at the stage where you think you're almost finished. Crossing the t's and dotting the i's took a lot of time. And I spent a lot of time doing and re-doing and re-checking solutions. There's a lot of problem solutions in there where if it were something I was doing in the classroom, there'd be no problem. I could get up at the board, make a mistake, say "Oh, dear!" erase it, recalculate it and there'd be no big problem. But it's the type of material you just can't have a mistake in the examples because it will drive students "right up a wall"! And so I've actually done all the problems two times each, right from scratch. Just to make sure there's no hitches. (4.2.2.4 - 2.2.5)
>
> In fact, what I've found, is that the major task can get done fairly quickly. I can sit down in the morning and write down everything I want right now for a lesson. But then I'm forever going back to that lesson and revising, changing, updating, doing all the very minor things that you normally wouldn't schedule into your time. To give you an example: I have a list that I started keeping. As

> I was working I thought of some silly little things that had to be taken care of, and I didn't want to interrupt myself at the time. I would add it to my list. I think my list added up to about 127 items to be taken care of if I remember right. And I'm still trying to work through that list to just make sure that certain sections make reference to certain other things that I'd overlooked the first time. That sort of thing; that numbering is consistent, make sure I tell the Editor that something that has just occured to me should be taken into account later on. (4.1.2.1 - 1.2.2)

Contrary to the experiences of the academics who had been away from basic-level courses for some time, the academic quoted above found the creative part of course writing easily done. Filling in the details, attending to procedure, and completeness were more difficult for him and occupied a great deal of his time as he attempted to produce a suitable set of learning materials in his field of expertise. In the process, it appears that this academic, on his own initiative, has devised a coping system that apparently works for him.

Procedural difficulties such as academic preparation and detailed work mentioned by the academics above, have been partially responsible for the time span between the beginning and the completion of a course. Having a text on which to base a course often speeds up the process for the writer. When a text is available, the writer is involved in producing a "wrap around course". However, appropriate learning materials are not always available, or if they are, publishers cannot guarantee continued production for the required five-year life span of the course. If all learning materials are produced by the academic, the process is called writing a "ground-up" course".

In the instance cited above, the academic has been with the University well over two years and his first course, only partially text-based, is still not available for student use. Although no statistics could be found on the average time involved in writing a first course at Athabasca University, this academic's experience appears to reflect typical circumstance.

Other factors which contribute to the length of time used to produce a course are the amount of work on the manuscript required from other team members, competing priorities experienced by other team members, and existing workloads in the printing facilities.

Learning Course Development Skills

Attention to detail is an important part of course development, and may seem a never-ending process for the course writer. Fairness to the student requires that written work be as complete and unequivocal as possible so that students have the best possible chance of mastering the required learning. Closely allied to that concern is the degree of clarity required for the production of learning materials. A respondent commented:

> I'd written a few things for publication but not things that were for classroom use, or anything that was comparable to this [course writing]. I guess my comparison is more what it's like to be in a classroom than it is to write an essay for publication. One must be much, much clearer. One can't leave any ideas dangling, must fill in a lot more gaps, pace things a lot better in the sense of starting with the easy and working up to the difficult. (3.1.1.4)

Clarity is an important component of distance education learning materials and a skill that generally must be learned or re-learned by new distance education academics. Distance education students, by definition, are separate from the source of the required learning and are left largely to their own devices to make sense of what has to be done and how to go about doing it. Thus, as little as possible can be left to chance or to leaps of logic or reasoning. One of the respondents spoke of his efforts to make course material clear and complete for student use:

> When I get drafts back from Instructional Designers with all sorts of comments saying, "The student won't understand this" or "that doesn't follow logically from that" or calls for using different examples or something like that -- I attempt to clarify it. Without going into any great detail, the courses are broken down into tiny little bits and pieces. In principal, the notion should be something like a tree. You start off with a tree and you're given a series of things that you are supposed to be able to accomplish. You're given material, you do tests on it, if you do well, you go onto the next block. If you don't, then there's a remedial block and you go over here. Then you do that, then try this thing again. So that, if perfect, you should be able to deal with all the problems or difficulties students have with the course. (2.1.1.5)

Clearly, this respondent is relating to a particular model which is suitable for the course material he is responsible for. The model he refers to is known as a "learning tree" which builds remedial exercises into the learning material. Significant organizational learning has occured in this individual's account. In an earlier session he had reported:

> In a sense I was something of a blank slate. I knew nothing about teaching. I had no real problem facing the fact that I knew nothing about teaching and learning. I guess what forces you to come face to face with it is the fact that you're putting it down on paper. You're writing it and then it's set in stone in a fashion (2.1.1.5-1.1.6)

It would seem that this informant, as he discussed the "learning tree" model he used in a course development project, was relating a learning activity that he engaged in while at Athabasca University to meet organization needs.

While skills are being adapted to the activity of writing courses for distance students, the production process is also beginning to swing into gear. Learning about production is an important part of learning the ropes. An academic explains:

> I haven't yet learned a lot of the ropes here. I think it hinges on how much background people have in terms of finding out how this outfit operates. I mean, if you're producing a course, at certain stages you'd better know what has to happen in media in terms of production, or you could get all screwed up. And what are the flips between them and copyright and doing all kinds of other things like that. It gets pretty complicated at some stages.

> The only thing that saved me was having an editor who did know the ropes. Nobody even attempted to teach me. (6.3.2.9)

Course production seems to be somewhat complex, as related by the academic quoted above, and, in his case, the complexities are not yet fully mastered after several years on the job. Some people, as he suggests, may have a background in production which would facilitate this learning, but those who have not been involved in these processes may not even have a grasp on the questions to be asked in finding their way through the organizational shoals. Fortunately for this academic, he had an Editor who knew the process, as observing that process was his main source of learning.

Learning Course Development Values

Not only must new skills be learned by academics discovering the role activities of distance learning, but new values need be forged as the professional adapts attitudes to meet the expectations of the new organization. A respondent addressed his confrontation with this problem:

> It was the kind of things that I would do at a traditional university. You know. Things like "ask them these questions and then ask them something else on the exam". The idea was that it was an indicator of their ability if they could make some kind of leap, a great mental leap, into what I had asked them earlier and what I had asked them on the exam. And those who fell by the wayside, were the chaff. That's what happens at traditional universities. The more you can occasionally

> mystify, the better academic you are because you have these high standards and only a few make it through your classes. Well, of course, no one ever challenges anybody at a traditional university, and they quite often confuse arrogance and ignorance, paradoxically, for good teaching. (6.3.2.3)

The view expressed by this respondent that university-level teaching tends to be teacher-centered rather than student-centered is supported by an Instructional Designer who provides this explanation:

> In the classroom-based discipline, the academic handles their problem of academic credibility on what is realistic, reasonable and ethically acceptable to expect of students in two ways. In the first place, they meet their, quote-unquote, academic acceptability by how they describe their course in the calendar. Secondly, they meet what's reasonable to expect by both the way they set their examinations and the way they grade them. Academics can then operate in two ways. One, they can simply make their examinations and evaluations trivial and most students pass the course. The other way that they go, though, and they tend to do this more in more senior courses, but they do it in some intro courses, too. They simply create extraordinarily tough exams, over which they have control of course, and they grade them, scale them and manipulate them to produce whatever outcome they want. You know, a preponderance of passes or a preponderance of failures. If they choose to produce a preponderance of failures - something more than 50% - they then go around saying to their peers and colleagues "Look. This is evidence of how sophisticated and demanding this course is and how complex my discipline is". In the meantime, of course, the student is literally at the mercy of the academic. We know that within any major discipline the students get very good at the "underground calendar" describing which is a "screen" course, which anybody can pass and so on. This often doesn't have anything to do with how intrinsically difficult or demanding the discipline. It has to do with prestige, status. (7.1.1.5 - 1.1.6)

Whether or not the process of teaching at a traditional university is correctly described by the above respondents, both see course development and delivery as a matter of prestige and status within the peer group, and, to a lesser extent among students. The quotes also point to the notion of student-centered learning as a concept of course design which is learned by many new academics at Athabasca University. These reports also suggests that few academics have educational as opposed to discipline related credentials, and that this lack is not a general concern among academics. As one key informant remarked:

> When you go through a program, a PhD program, you learn absolutely nothing about teaching. About how people learn. You just stand up and do it. Here, it becomes very important because the teacher and the group of students -- that link, is broken. Then the whole notion of how people learn becomes very central. (2.1.1.5)

Without a formal background in pedagogy, many of the respondents found the initial challenge of creating a learning climate where none existed, a demanding task. One consideration, as the excerpt notes, was an underdeveloped sense of student needs beyond necessary information accrual. Other considerations mentioned were the reliance on a physical presence to provide explanations, expand on topics, or create a variety of learning opportunities.

How Course Development Is Learned

Until recently, a number of academics at Athabasca University were academics designated as Instructional Designers (IDs) whose primary role responsibility was assisting faculty members to design courses. Due to reorganization, three remain in that role and the rest have become academic coordinators or members of a new department called the Center for Distance Education. As specialists in Educational Psychology and instructional development, they attempted to ensure that courses, at least minimally, met an internally generated level of criteria considered to exemplify good course design. They worked with academic writers to produce student-centered learning materials. To some extent, the ID provides the first-time writer with a "recipe" which will guide them through the institutional processes involved in course production. An ID describes these components:

> I think you have a recipe for part of it because I think you've now started to understand the process as a mechanistic process. In other words, you understand what has to be in the Student Manual, what has to be in the Phase III, what has to be in the Tutor Manual. You know, the issues like Copyright, Visual Design, Printing. You understand the time frame in which these events occur, the dynamics of the sub-parts of the organization that relate to them. So, as a result, you tend to learn some recipe-like things about putting together a course. And, definitely, you become better at that, I would think, by doing it once. On the other hand, that recipe is only as good as its ingredients, if you want to stick with your analogy. So, you know, if you go to the discount store and buy all your ingredients, you

> may not come up with the best soup. And also, sometimes there's better recipes. And also there's different tastes. And so, pursuing that analogy, I would think that you shouldn't become complacent and committed to that particular recipe, but you should be able to use its strengths. And your experience with doing it is a positive kind of thing.
>
> We're continually asked the question, "Gee, does the student really need that" or "Is this really enough of that" or "Is this really the right kind of structure?". "Is there enough feedback?". For me, it's a matter of looking at a kind of hierarchy of heuristic questions that relate to learning that I think have to be addressed. And as long as you keep those questions in mind, then a lot of recipes can be effective. If you don't keep those questions in mind, then I think you can get yourself into trouble and I think then the arguments for the quality of the course become less related to the student and more related to its content. (8.1.2.2)

Physical processes of line production can be alien territory for new academics. A number of individuals and departments are involved in course production at Athabasca University, which require academics to provide information for present and future functioning (e.g. the number of course materials to be produced, compatability with registry procedures, program articulation, budgetary implications, copyright clearances and the like). In addition, the academic coordinates the flow of paper and materials through other professionals towards accomplishing the final products. Academics learn a number of skills in this process. Moreover, further socialization occurs as each interaction provides new information, exemplifies attitudes, articulates concerns and subtly confers cultural learnings from group members to the new academic.

As the ID cited above notes, the "recipe" for proceeding through the system is an important part of course writing, but the "ingredients" and the creative process involved in course production are also important aspects. Anxiety may be one of the reasons that new academics find it difficult to attend to a "hierarchy of heuristic questions". An administrator relates his experience with newcomers who have been hired soon after receiving a graduate degree:

> The tendency is, and here's where I think the parallel with other universities is important, young, bright PhD graduates, people right out of grad school, no matter how good they are in their discipline, have a natural tendency to try to teach their thesis. Even in in the classroom, there's a tremendous tendency of young academics to try to teach at the graduate level. In distance education, that's exacerbated by the fact that the course materials that you're planning are going to be seen. They're visible. They're public. And so, you have this added concern, plus the fact that there's a common tendency to down-grade adult education, distance education, whatever, correspondence education as academically inferior. So if you come in as an academic concerned about your reputation, plus having a natural tendency to teach all you know, etc., then put all those factors together and what a young academic is going to do is produce a very heavy course. One that is very difficult. Then throw in the typical Athabasca University student who's out there, with a poor self-concept and desperately looking for success, and, I mean, the recipe is one for disaster. That is why you have the ID models and the Editors and all those things which are built in to somehow kind of counteract and compensate. (11.1.1.3 - 4)

"People right out of grad school" are targeted by the administrator cited above as experiencing anxiety in producing a highly visible product which will establish an academic reputation by reproducing their own most recent learning experience for undergraduate students. He links the tendency for academics to replicate a thesis to an event that occurs in more traditional classrooms as well, but suggests that in distance education, the results are more serious. IDs and Editors influence the process of directing course materials to meet student needs. Not only new PhDs experience difficulty in preparing suitable courses for distance education students. Similar general responses in approaching course production for the first time were reported by academics who had extensive teaching experience prior to coming to Athabasca University. An ID outlines the approach she uses with all newcomers to develop skills and attitudes about the nature of learning and approaches to course material presentations:

> Any competent PhD will readily produce a course outline. I think that my very, very first move with them is, don't write. I don't want you to go away and write anything. I want you to stop and do an analysis. This gets more or less difficult depending on how much fluency I have with the discipline that they're in. But the basic principle I operate with is, "Take what you have done or experienced in teaching and forget it -- for a moment". And then step back and say,"You are a learner". And ask these kinds of questions -- "What is it you want to learn?" "Why is it in discipline 'X'?" "Why does the student really want to learn?" And all that that really does is force the academic to step back. Basically an academic is trying to teach a student all that there is to know about 'X' - give them a word and they will freely associate. The basic question is "Who gives a damn?" The explanation is "It's important to learn this academic discipline". The next question is "Why is it?" They can't tell you. They have to think through "What does a student need to know and why?". Otherwise, they'll spew forth all there is to know and then ask the student to learn all there is to know. And that's neither fair nor relevant.

(7.1.1.4)

The questions posed by this Instructional Designer can be difficult and demanding. As previous reports indicated, most academics knew little about pedagogical theory or techniques prior to coming to Athabasca University. Teaching was just "something you did". This ID suggests that academics at Athabasca University should "take what they have done and experienced in teaching and forget it -- for a moment." With these words, skills academics may presume they have, are, at least initially, disregarded. Rather, academics are asked to analyze first their discipline and then the particular content within that discipline. This ID suggests that answers do not come easily to most newcomers, but require some analysis and specification.

Being required to wipe the mental slate clean of previous teaching experience and understandings can be threatening to new academics who may find that their years of background have little currency in the new setting. A professional anchor is removed as academic encounter their first "disconfirming" experience. Disconfirmation results when an event occurs which confronts a new employee's understanding of their perceived abilities and their self-images as professionals. Schein (1978:68) notes that disconfirmation affects valued parts of the self from which the person obtains self esteem and comfort as a successful career occupant.

Disconfirming incidents at a variety of impact levels may be integral aspects of learning new roles. Although damaging to the well-being of the individual who is abruptly brought face-to-face with what the organization conceives to be insufficiencies of action or attitude, nevertheless, disconfirming incidents also provide a sharp reminder that at least some old role behaviors must be left behind if the newcomer is to be successful in the novel setting. Being somewhat "unfrozen" from the past, the individual is then more likely to be psychologically disposed to receive new learning and to conform to the expectations of the organization.

Instructional Designers may be the people involved in some disconfirming experiences for beginning academics. However, they may also be a source of challenge and excitement as they engage with the newcomer in a learning process. A typical report:

> I found working with IDs one of the most challenging experiences I've had here. The several that I've worked with have been absolutely excellent. I have had some wonderful arguments about how certain things ought to be communicated and why. I've been challenged right to the tips of my toes. One of the reasons that [my first course] was such an exceptional course was that I had some excellent ID input. I couldn't have written like that on my own. I mean, I worked like an ass on the substance of the stuff, but if I hadn't had the ID input it wouldn't have been half of what it is. (6.1.4.3)

When asked how this challenge to create better learning materials was made, the same informant said:

> The way he asked me to do it indicated that, first of all I was 'out to lunch'. Yeah! "Well", he said, "what do you really want students to learn?" And when he asked me that, it meant that I had to think about the material more closely than I ever had at a traditional university, where I could always clarify. And a number of times I had to go back and re-read the material three or four times. And say, "What did I really want students to learn? What's really important here?" And I found it an incredibly scary process. I mean, it challenged me to the core of my academic being! But I also realized that if I had enough guts to see it through, I might produce something that was really worthwhile learning. (6.3.2.3)

This report would seem to be the model-in-action described by the Instructional Designer in a previous passage. The informant emphasizes the struggle he had with meeting the challenge posed by the ID, in particular, in changing attitudes from "What to I want to teach?" to "What do I want the student to learn?" It is also apparent in this account that a socializing event has occured -- the academic becomes enthusiastic about producing "something that was really worthwhile learning".

IDs were important socializing agents for many of the new academics who arrived at Athabasca University. Their help and support were considered central components in job learning to the academics reporting in this study. As one respondent commented:

> Hey, these guys are experts on learning. We're not. We're actually laymen on learning. (1.2.1.8)

Some of the people interviewed for this study did not have significant ID assistance with the first course development project. One arrived at Athabasca University as the secondment of his assigned ID to the academic unit was ending and the Center was being established. This academic experienced a different introduction to the task of course writing:

> How to write a course was, I think, a bit of "hit and miss". I learned that, again partly on my own just by reading things I could get my hands on that were around here, partly by having discussions with [the ID]. And he didn't spend a heck of a lot of time with me the way, I think, someone like [a faculty resident ID] does when she's hammering people to get things done. But three or four times, we had fairly good long discussions. And I think he straightened me around on a few things. There were just one or two points that he made that made me stop and think and re-look at things that I think got me going. A very good example of that is, I was 'spinning my wheels' for awhile trying to get the first lesson done. And finally I said to [the ID] -- I was telling him how frustrating it was because what I really wanted to do was get on to the "meat" of the course, which happened to be about lesson three or four. And he said the obvious thing, which was, "Why don't you start with lesson three or four?". And as soon as he said that, it became perfectly clear that that was the way I should do it. In fact, I wrote the course that way. From lesson three through to twelve, and then I went back and did one and two, in light of what I knew at the time. So there were just a few things like that that got me on track. (4.2.2.3)

Isolation when writing a course is a problem for many academics. The faculty member quoted above is the only person hired in his discipline at Athabasca University (which is the case for the majority of academic members). In addition, there are no students present that one can run ideas by, or hone emerging concepts with. The academic is alone in his judgements of what should be included, where it should be placed, and how it should be approached, although IDs have been very helpful in many of these regards. It is not atypical that a course writer, such as this academic, working basically alone, should find himself so mired in the task, that an obvious solution to a procedural difficulty would elude him.

The second academic who did not have an ID on his first course received help from a colleague. His report:

> I was fortunate enough to get on a team with one of your colleagues [a fellow faculty member]. That was a great fortune! He really had experience to deal with the students' mind, and with him, I really thought we could do something. Collaboration really made the clay form. But had there been something else [to help my learning], whatever media it had been, I would have appreciated it, and I think I would really have worked at it. I've had a lot of teaching experience, but I felt the lack of a real structured program for new academics here. (5.1.1.8)

Although the colleague was helpful in the socialization process, particularly in providing insights to distance education students, the academic cited above wanted a wider base of information than he was given. It would seem that his years of experience in a more traditional academic environment did not provide sufficient background for the task at hand in a distance education system.

Other academics expanded on the theme introduced by the previous respondent on the "hit and miss" approach to task learning. One respondent who experienced a great deal of difficulty in the first years with getting a course into production was eventually assigned an ID to work closely with him, rather than monitor his progress. He expresses some bitterness in this regard:

> Why couldn't that have happened the first year I was here? Or the second year? I hear the stories of other guys slugging it out. Learning the hard way. Of course, there is a certain amount of pride. People -- especially academics -- don't want to say they're failing or falling behind or making mistakes. (1.1.2.7)

- Perhaps academics are somewhat responsible for the "hit and miss" approach if they don't seek to further their own learning by admitting they are experiencing difficulties and asking for help. It may also be possible that openly stating these problems is a less than realistic option for people who have been trained to consider themselves "expert". When socialization assistance is available, academics seem to value the help. A theme running through these accounts would appear to indicate that most academics would appreciate an additional, more structured program, where learning could occur in a non-threatening environment. As well, it could be assumed from these accounts that present socialization procedures tend to produce tension, disaffection and loss of self-esteem which may result in less than optimally productive activities.

Summary

Developing a course is one of the first tasks encountered by an in-coming academic at Athabasca University. Most newcomers, accustomed to the activities involved in preparing course outlines and lecture notes for in-class use, tend to perceive the new job responsibility in the light of past behaviors. The majority of key informants found course writing and production far more difficult and demanding tasks than they had anticipated. Some reasons which were advanced to account for the gap between expectations and job reality were subject matter rustiness, the necessity of acquiring new skills, and the need to adapt attitudes to students and to subject matter presentation.

The process of learning and adapting to the new role of course writer working with a team of organizational professionals were a source of disconfirmation to academics perceptions of themselves as capable and productive professionals. Disconfirmations occured as group members communicated the unacceptability of previous role behaviors in current group functioning. Specific disconfirmations were reported in the areas of attitudes to students and learning, working as a part of a line production facility and the desirability of learning new skills. Disconfirmations were observed to reduce self-esteem while increasing openness to new learnings as academics strove to stabilize themselves within a novel environment. Instructional Designers played the greatest role in the socializing activities involved in the task of course production, but other organizational members, such as Editors and colleagues, also contributed to organizational learnings during the course of production interactions.

Although the development of courses is an important part of the role played by academics in distance education, they perceive it to be a larger and more demanding task than anticipated, with less organizational support than they would have desired to guide them through the process. In addition, the task requires skills that academics may or may not feel they have acquired. These factors, combined with organizational expectations that a course will be written to a given deadline can seriously affect a new faculty member's self image of themselves as teacher, writer and academician.

Course Delivery

Once a course has gone through the production process, it is considered "on-the-shelf", or ready for student use. At this point, another series of institutional mechanisms swing into place, some of them guided by the academic who is responsible for coordinating the delivery of courses in his or her area.

The course delivery system at Athabasca University can be broken down into two general areas of activity. One is the administrative activity within a distance teaching university which support the logistical functions of the institution, such as the purchasing of equipment, mail room functioning, administration of staff and so on. To a large extent, these functions operate without the direct intervention of faculty members.

The second general area of course delivery functions is a student-support set of activities which, while usually housed in a variety of departments, require interaction and coordination by academic members to effect a total delivery system. Included in student-support functioning are some admission procedures, course material inventory concerns, student counseling services, tutorial services, examinations and evaluation, technical support systems, regional offices, inter-organizational cooperations, and the like. Academics liaise with these departments as required by work load, delivery complexity, student needs, and tutor requirements.

For the academic, active course delivery consists of the teaching activities of responding to students and interaction with tutors, while other student-support activities tend to be largely administrative in nature and in execution. When discussing course delivery, academics participating in this study tended to approach the topic in three basic ways: (1) to invoke comparisons with experiences in more traditional settings; (2) statements indicating some level of unease with the process as they currently understand it, or; (3) accounts accepting circumstance or practice as "the way things should be done". The following section will present academics perceptions of their role as distance teachers.

Students

Socialization processes for academics learning their role at Athabasca University includes adapting to students-at-a-distance -- students they rarely, if ever, see -- students who are known only through the academic's files, marking of papers, telephone interactions, and general demographic information.

Students at Athabasca University must be 18 years of age and residents of Canada to meet entry requirements (Athabasca University Calendar, 1986). Students who attend Athabasca University were profiled in a report compiled by the Office of Institutional Studies (1986). According to their research, students selected Athabasca University because it was the only choice known to be available to their particular circumstances at the time they enroled. The Student Profile (1986) indicates that about 75% of students registering intend to use credits received at Athabasca University to supplement those earned at other institutions in order to achieve their educational goals. Women students are in the majority (68%) and the age of most students is between 25 and 44 (74%). Career related reasons and credit transfer or assembly account for approximately 65% of the motivation for enroling at AU., while almost three-quarters of registrations were made because home study learning accommodates students present time commitments and obligations. Seventy-eight percent of the students are employed outside of the home with the largest occupational categories reported as clerical/office workers, nurses/therapists and homemakers.

The demographic information emphasizes that students tend to respond to the the advantages of openness and flexibility available through Athabasca University. Another advantage of distance education is that it provides a method of reaching large numbers of students in a cost-effective manner. Interested in the application of distance education techniques to Third World countries, one of the interviewees makes this point:

> Essentially what distance education is all about is replacing the teacher. And teachers are scarce and expensive in Third World countries. There is a Thai University that has something like a half million students. They're talking about reaching potentially huge numbers of students and the cost per student (doing that with essentially one written package) falls to a very, very small fraction of the cost of trying to set up a teacher for every 40, 50 or 100 students. Let alone being able to get into rural areas. That always has been one of the major advantages of distance education. (2.2.1.11 -2.1.12)

Distance education has the potential of making education available to great numbers of students. It can also reach into remote areas so that students can learn as they carry out their every day activities while avoiding the cost of living near a campus environment. However, Athabasca University does not usually choose to "replace the teacher" except in the sense of replacing the teacher in the classroom. Speaking to this point, one of the academics participating in this study suggests that the focal role of Athabasca University is to teach:

> If society should support this institution, why should it support it? My feeling is, strongly, that it should support it only because of its teaching function. (5.1.1.4)

The prospectus of Athabasca University begins with the sentence "Athabasca University is a service organization whose goal it is to provide university level undergraduate education to adult Canadians". According to Friedman (1981), this emphasis on service to students is unusual for an academic institution of higher education. Learning to adapt to the notion of student service, particularly adult students as outlined in the demographic profile, can be a challenge for new academics.

Academics, new to an open university, sometimes experience some difficulty in coming to grips with accommodating to experienced adult students, who have very specific learning needs, who work relatively independently with the course materials and in a variety of environments. For example, IDs frequently feel required to advise first-time course writers to beware of selecting a text that incorporates such lines as "when you get out of college", or which frequently uses student experiences as illustrations of certain concepts or theories. Such examples are considered "talking down" to the adult student. Despite such maxims, the struggle for the academic to respond to adult learners is characterized more by developing an attitudinal response than reliance upon a set of firm criteria to be followed. As one respondent commented:

> From within AU itself, even from the IDs, there's no attitude and knowledge centered around such concepts that our learners are adults, they're not snot-nosed kids out of high school. Our average student [in this department] is 38.2, married, three kids and female, you know. So the design [of the course] has to take that into account. Now the

> university, till now, has not been able to take that into account. (1.2.1.12)

Many IDs may dispute the point that they are less than fully conversant with the needs of adult learners, but the respondent cited above may be able to make a case that there is too little understanding among faculty members of the adult as a learner. Efforts to develop techniques and sensitivities to respond to the principles of adult learning are present in the University community, if not a full scale focus of general academic activity. For example, recent support for academic initiatives resulted in a series of projects aimed at further developing techniques for responding to the adult student. (Fund for Innovative Proposal Summary, Internal Memo, June 18, 1986).

Nevertheless, a stereotype which lumps all students together in a mythical characterization of "the student" appears to exist. Such stereotyping results in rather heated rhetoric involving such rallying cries as "the student must be made to take ...", or "students must be restricted from..." or "students can't be allowed to ...". This sort of behavior reflects a major fallacy according to one of the key informants:

> I think this is an institution in which people have very, very disparate ideas about what their own role is and what a sort of typical student either is or should be like. And I think these disputes probably take place in some form in other institutions as well. But there are some "myths" going around (and I call them "myths" on purpose)

> that, I think, because of the beliefs I have, are very wrong-headed and destructive. I think that our typical student is an adult student with a very complex life who would very much like to make Athabasca University a part of their lives but can't always manage that when they're a mother [or a worker]. And there's a "myth" that the next group of students, the one that's on cue, the one that's waiting to get into your class, get into your course, is bright-eyed, youthful, shining, pencil-sharpened, personal computer at the ready, who is just going to be very different from the ones already in the classes. Those are sluggish, not serious, procrastinators. "Let's churn them out and get those bright new ones in." Well, I think that's a "myth". There are other "myths" as well. We've got to whip our students into shape, we have to inform them better. Neither of those are reasonably likely to happen. (3.2.3.5)

In this quotation the academic indicates that she has perceived an ideological pull between institutional standards which favor "meeting students where they are" and a tendency for the institution to develop systems and strategies for idealized students. Conflicts in ideologies may require the new academic to seek his or her personal compromises between the ideal world, as they perceive it, and the "real" world, as described by other organizational members, if they are to remain within the institution. Moreover, they may have to choose which issues they will contend and which they will allow to pass by if they are to maintain their personal sense of integrity.

It may be remembered that the stated mission of Athabasca University is to "remove the barriers that traditionally restrict access to and success in university-level studies and to increase the equality of educational opportunity for all adult Canadians". This statement stresses openness and flexibility in providing an educational service to adults and increasing access to those who are attempting to alter their socio-economic status. The above quotation would seem to indicate that some academics would prefer students to manifest some sort of an ideal image of individuals who will succeed despite the system, while guided in a most rigorous fashion by those who "know what is best". This attitude would seem to be an indication of remembered values and beliefs being transfered into the new work setting.

Comparison with Classroom Teaching

The academics interviewed for this study all had previous classroom-based experience. This teaching background may have provoked an "anniversary experience" (Louis,1980) for some academics. An "anniversary experience" is a significant past event or events which, when a prompting stimulus is encountered, brings the situation to mind. Usually, the circumstances surrounding the event become somewhat blurred over time, resulting in selective recall (Wilmot, 1979). Emotional rather than factual responses tend to characterize the corresponding memory, although certain events may stand out sharply. Examples of the "anniversary experience" include the thoughts and emotions you remember when you recall, on triggering occassions, such events as the day you became engaged, the birth of a baby, undergoing an operation, the death of a loved one, or such personal anniversaries as birthdays, weddings and the like. Most of the academics responding to this study, for example, reported nostalgia for the interaction and dynamism of the live teacher-student situation. A typical account:

> On the negative side, I think you'd have to say that for anyone who enjoys the teaching side of it, certainly there's something missing there. You don't have the classroom situation and the interaction with the class that can certainly be enjoyable. (2.1.2.2)

The suggestion here is that the process of course delivery is not seen as "really teaching". Something is "missing". Several suggestions were made to account for the student-teacher ingredients which appeared to be deficient in the distance mode of education. The individual cited above, for instance, mentioned the synergistic relationship that exists between the teacher and the group of students.

> Just the exposure of new ideas to a class that can then challenge and throw them back. There is that kind of interaction which probably can give one interest in new areas that you don't have. (2.1.2.2)

A second academic mentioned the ease with which one could respond to student need:

> In the classroom I'm not all that concerned about checking solutions. Do a solution and if it doesn't work out, you can just sort of sit back and say "Oh well, I'll get it for you next time", quickly work

> out the solution and then you do it. (4.1.2.2)

Another spoke of the flexibility of the classroom and the intimate nature of the interaction between a group of students and the teacher:

> You always feel a little more comfortable if you're standing up in front of a group talking. Nothing is written down. There is nothing to be examined--for someone to say this is exactly the best way one could have gone about doing this. (2.1.1.6)

A fourth ingredient which is reported missing in distance education is the satisfaction some academics get from the sense of themselves as performers with the class as audience.

> I'm enough of a ham that I really like getting up in a classroom. And you have to see me to believe me. I leap around and do things, and I like seeing the faces with the voices. (6.3.2.7)

Even the academic, participating in this study, who has yet to have a course ready for student use was beginning to be somewhat uncomfortable with the lack of a student population. He commented:

> I always thought I was a fairly good teacher and I always liked the time that I spent in class. But I couldn't stand getting ready for class. I couldn't stand rushing to class. I often saw it as an interference with everything else I was trying to do that day. After about eight months, it started to occur to me that I might not mind walking back into a classroom again. I have learned that I rather liked some of the time I spent in the classroom. (4.1.2.8)

Again, in this passage, the theme is struck of the perception many academics have of their being good teachers. Perhaps there is some overtly unrecognized relationship between this understanding of self and choosing Athabasca University as a place to work. If people see themselves excelling in one aspect of role performance, it might be expected that they would, at least subconsciously, seek a venue in which such activity would be valued.

Another problem for academics adapting to the student body in a distance education institution is that few students put their studies at the core of their life experiences. One of the academics makes this point:

> I think that teaching in the [traditional] university one tends to have the most interaction with the liveliest students, the ones that grab your attention because they are right there saying neat, interesting things. Typically, the younger students have less on their minds -- that is less family matters -- matters extraneous to the university. That's always been very stimulating, intellectually. The changes I noticed were, first, the level of involvement with their studies. Typically, distance education students, I have found, have many more commitments and sort of tuck their courses in with everything else. There's a joke I used to make about how university students were so neurotic that it made them interesting. But on the other hand, I always, right from the beginning, liked the home-study student. I just like the idea of people reading Homer and Plato and so on all over the province, who normally just wouldn't have an opportunity to do that. So right away there were really, really important differences and there were just some things that I just liked better about home-study students, and some things I didn't like quite so much. (3.1.1.2)

As this respondent indicates, the notion of providing educational opportunities where other choices are not feasible may have some measure of allure for some academics. The idea of people studying, guided, but essentially on their own in widely dispersed locations, appears to fulfill a general educational goal for some teachers. Perhaps it is the notion of order, of the "rightness" of things, as people become engaged in their own formally-guided intellectual growth outside of an institutional complex.

Yet, the notion of "teaching" through distance education methods does not appear to rest easily within the value systems of the reporting academics even though they have accumulated several years' experience within the system. Two powerful reasons that distance education course delivery as practised at Athabasca University may be threatening to professional self-esteem can be found in the works of Lippitt (1968) and Winchester (1986).

Lippitt (1968) suggests that academics assume they will establish a prescriptive interaction with students. Commenting on the role of the teacher as a socializing agent, Lippitt (1968:338) indicates that a major source of personal teacher satisfaction is their positive dependency relationships with students. Becoming a manager, rather than a controller, of the socialization experience of program students in one's discipline may be unsatisfying in a distance education context because it creates a major unmet personal need to be a central figure to the student.

The second reason is suggested by Winchester (1986:277) who proposes that a central feature of the professorial role is the attitude that it is crucial that knowledge be transmitted with an understanding of its dynamic and tentative nature. Academics and students involved in distance education work primarily with course materials that are relatively static in form and content over an anticipated five year "shelf-life" (in practise, this period may be considerably extended). The relative immutablity of the course materials may, partially at least, subvert the "dynamic and tentative" nature of the evolving area of study, and create some intellectual discomfort for the faculty member.

Academic informants referred to missing the interaction with students and expressed nostalgia for the spontaneity and dynamic interaction of the classroom. These responses would seem to lend credence to the suggestion that these key informants would prefer establishing positive dependency relationships with students and a more dynamic interaction with learning materials, students and themselves than is generally possible in a distance education facility.

"Tucking courses in with everything else" creates unusual demands for academic staff who deal with students. Virtually the entire student body they respond to have a series of life situations around which their learning must be built. Meeting these needs sometimes puts considerable demands on the academic. An account:

> I tutor because there's a need. I tutor extra students, who need tutoring, who can't fit into any other tutorable slot because they're in prison or because they have little kids and can't call at the right time. I do it out of a sense of professional responsibility. And I usually enjoy it because there's more of a challenge. (6.3.2.7)

Working with students, for the distance-teaching academic, requires a certain amount of evening and weekend work, usually in the neighborhood of four to six hours a week. But academics soon learn that this allocation of personal time is an important role responsibility. As the quotation above suggests, there are also personal satisfactions to be obtained from performing this duty.

Tutoring

Particularly when a course is new, an academic will choose to tutor students directly in order to "de-bug" content and procedures as well as to conduct an informal field test of the strengths and weaknesses of materials in use. Freshman academics are also frequently asked to tutor a course as an introduction to the dynamics of distance student interactions. One of the academics reporting in this study missed the opportunity to tutor when he first came to Athabasca University and felt it was a serious lack in his preparation to become a distance education teacher:

> I found the lack of feedback from student to coordinator was a problem. I was surprised by the fact that I really had very little contact with students. Now that was partially due to the fact that although I became a coordinator, I didn't take on tutor duties in that course. And I think that was a mistake on the part of me and on the part of the University. They didn't insist that in the beginning that I displace one of the existing tutors in the course. The course that I took responsibility for was declining in enrolment because other courses would come along to take up some of the student population. And so there wasn't any need for me to tutor, but I still think that was a bad mistake on my part. After I started to tutor, I had a better feeling (5.1.1.9)

This respondent felt that he took an overly long time to develop a "feel" for the distance education student. When writing a course for the first time, the lack of that "feel" can be a drawback, particularly when course materials are developed which are then in place for a period of five years or more. Lack of sensitivity to the differing needs of students expected to use the learning package can result in built-in "glitches" or barriers which then must be "tutored out" over the life of the course. As another respondent commented:

> Particular problem areas that come up in the text or in the course materials, that, as tutors, we discuss and realize that "O.K. There are going to be more people that have a problem with this, or that this area is just a difficult concept, so that's something that needs to be explained". Or, "these questions in the quizzes are somewhat misleading, so when we come to them, it's a good idea to just stop and explain a little further". (2.2.1.8)

The dynamic of distance teaching is less in the evolution and on-going development of the subject matter, than in the growth of interactional relationships between tutor and student. An academic explains how he builds this dynamic:

> I see tutoring as a chance to, with some people, motivate them to get in gear. I have occasionally chewed them out royally and given them heck. I had one student in tears, she was so mad. I guess I see my role as tutoring is ensuring that they learn it. I teach them, I inspire them, and I hopefully challenge them. And if they need it, I give them heck.
>
> I think I'm a good tutor. I think I was an excellent teacher. I think I've listened with interest, I articulate genuine interest. I think that I'm able, too, with the students who are having trouble, to motivate them to do the absolute best they can. I think I'm able to be critical of them and separate that critics to being of their work. Personally, I don't, for example, write "this is garbage, this is crap", on essays. If I happen to have a criticism, I will clearly and exactly say what the problem is, what the student has to do. (6.3.2.8)

This account tends to capture the dynamic of student-tutor interaction at a distance education university. Here the student has a choice to continue or to leave depending on their own needs and circumstances. They experience no group pressures which may influence them, nor have they particular settings within the institution which they can relate to. However, once a student does choose the interactive mode with the University, a dialogue begins which is very different than that found in the typical classroom. One difference is that the interaction is extended over time as students are not bound to observe a traditional semester sequence. Another difference is that the dialogue occurs through mail and telephone links rather than face-to-face. When the tutor relates to the student it is on a one-on-one basis, with each in possession of a copy of the learning materials usually prepared by someone else. Within these constraints, the tutor addresses solely that student's need. The student, in turn, usually sees the tutor as the primary link with the institution, and uses this connection for most of the information and support that they require. Tutors usually become adept at determining what a student's specific needs are and attempt to provide the appropriate response. Little formal training in the tutor/student dialogue is available for academics so that their skills in this area are usually honed through practice.

Holding specific "student hours" is difficult for academics whose students must call when (and sometimes if) they can get access to a phone, or after the baby has finally gone down for her nap, or when his wife has gone off to her shift. An academic discusses how he copes with this phenomenon:

> I have gotten some people through under very difficult circumstances. I had one lady have a baby in the second week of the course. She took her quiz in the hospital the morning after. She had four kids at home and couldn't talk to me until after nine o'clock when she had all of them in bed. And she was exhausted, which I could appreciate. She had only six weeks to do the course because she had a student loan. And, I'll tell you, I tutored her on that one. I'd get through with my ordinary tutoring about 8:30 and I would end up tutoring her until 10 or 10:30 and get home about 11, just exhausted. And she made it and she aced the course.

(6.3.2.7)

Themes of professional dedication and commitment to service to students are evident in the above account. Most academics discover that they are called upon to respond to students in a variety of ways and at a variety of times, at least on occasion. Virtually every academic has stories of students who have overcome, or are attempting to overcome, difficult life situations in order to pursue their studies.

The tutorial functions of motivating students, constructively criticizing their work and interpreting the course and the university to the students tend to be more frequent and important roles than presenting course materials. According to Robinson (1981), in a distance learning system the student is more likely to experience isolation, even alienation, from the institution. Students may be uncertain of how the system functions or whom they should approach for information on which to make further decisions. Adult students who have been out of touch with formal education for some time, or who have limited experience of it, are often lacking in confidence in their own capacity to learn. In addition, the student may experience difficulties arising from personal circumstances which may affect studies or may require the tutor to act as counsellor. These, of course, are functions that any teacher undertakes, but in a distance education institution the problems tend to be exacerbated by distance, by the self-contained nature of course materials and by the absence of fellow students experiencing similar difficulties who can share coping strategies.

Most academics appear to take their tutoring functions seriously:

> I think from what I've heard, over-heard, from other people who are tutoring on the few evenings that I have tutored [in the building], there's a lot of really conscientious effort put into it. (6.3.2.8)

A factor which further contributes to the difficulty distance education academics experience in adapting to the re-defined teaching situation is the intervention of a communication tool in the interaction. In this instance, the communication tool is usually the telephone. Most people are not strangers to using the telephone in their day-to-day transactions, but few have had experience with the telephone as a teaching mechanism. Without face-to-face interaction, some academics experience a vague, uncomfortable disorientation:

> The telephone changes the interaction. Very much so. I'd be hard put to say exactly how, but you certainly miss the interaction. I enjoy a classroom interaction (2.1.1.6)

What changes is the communication channel. Feedback, in the form of a number of non-verbal cues, is absent. Awareness of the expense involved in using long-distance telephone lines may also be a hindrance to the free flow of information as both parties are usually anxious to conduct their business and break the connection. In these circumstances, the message components of a communication are emphasized while the relationship aspects are de-emphasized.

As well, a perception of a power relationship may exist in the minds of students who are aware of the status of the professor and mindful of political considerations which may affect their grades or their standing with the organization. Breaking down power perceptions so that an open exchange can ensue is a difficult task over the telephone, particularly when the academic may speak to a particular student only once or twice in the course of the study program.

Finally, few academics or students have received training in the use of the telephone as a communication tool. Therefore, there is likely to be less ease with adapting to the intervention of the telephone as compared with the more direct face-to-face interaction. A response from one academic:

> Teaching on the phone? I think it's the pits! I think it works though. (6.3.2.7)

Perhaps the whole notion of tutoring was over-sold to this individual when he first came to Athabasca University. At another point he remarks:

> The attitude that I had when I came here, which I got from [my superior] was that tutoring was almost like a sacred experience. He explained to me that I had to tutor. If you haven't tutored, you aren't forwarding a view. Which I found hard to understand because I'd taught a lot. Then when I did it, I wasn't that impressed with the experience. (6.3.2.8)

Other academics also had reservations about their role as tutor. One damned it with faint praise:

> I enjoy classroom teaching. So that's something that's definitely a drawback. Right now I've got a group of students [to tutor], so I call them or they call me. That way we get a little of the one-on-one. (2.1.1.6)

Another reported that, while motivating and assisting in various processes was valuable, student-tutor interaction tended to be short on mental challenge.

> For a long time I thought that just tutoring home study students was just not enough intellectual stimulation. As a matter of fact, that has turned out to be true. That's still a problem. (3.1.1.2)

However, faculty members agree that telephone tutoring does work. In the opinion of at least one academic reporting to the study, tutoring is central to the operation of Athabasca University.

> I was quite impressed by the fact that we have telephone tutors at all. Whether it operates efficiently or not is another question. But just the fact that it's there, that the general perception out there in the public (like the girl I talked to in the bank last week) is that it's a real good idea. And they really like the idea that they can take a course and talk to someone over the phone, instead of just sitting there going crazy

> because they can't understand a paragraph in a text book. And I think just home-study telephone tutoring is our main thing and should be. (4.3.1.15)

It would seem that the academics contributing to this study saw tutoring as a "good thing", but were generally less than enthusiastic about their own participation in the role. Most academics work with part-time tutors. In some instances all of the tutoring in a particular course is done by outside tutors; in other cases, academics share in the tutoring duties. When external tutors are employed, academics assume the role of employer. Working with external instructors is a challenging work component for many new academics.

Tutors

A key figure in the Athabasca University student support systems is the tutor. Some tutors are hired to offer course presentations via seminar (face-to-face) or through teleconferencing. Others, who make up the bulk of tutorial staff, are hired as telephone tutors. Telephone tutors are assigned a block of approximately 30 students who are in all stages of progress through the course materials. As students complete their credit requirements and are passed out of the tutor's domain, others are assigned by registry to fill the spaces in the tutor block. All tutors are part-time employees, some of whom may never have seen the building which houses the institution they work for, or have met in person any of the personnel they deal with on a weekly basis.

Tutors experience two levels of institutional reporting. One is to the academic who is responsible for their hiring, orientation, exit (if need be), student evaluation, and level and type of student contact. The other reporting line is to Tutorial Services who handle hiring processes, monitor tutor blocks, provide supplies and conduct contractual arrangements for tutors, in consultation with academic staff.

Some academics can be responsible for the training and supervision of a number of tutors. There may be up to 30 or more tutors to a course, and the academic may be responsible for more than one course that requires tutors. Other academics may only have one or two tutors responding to them. The variation is due to a number of factors including student demand, the number of requests for seminar or teleconferenced offerings, the centrality of the course to program requirements or to external professional designations, the newness of the course and the amount of publicity the course receives.

Tutors are often the only person a student actually comes in contact with in the university. As focal figures, tutors interact with the student on many dimensions from public relations informant, to process consultant, to professor, to confidant. Many of the tutors offer an exceptional level of service to the university. An internal document reports:

> A long time tutor, and resource in many other ways, was recently referred to by the Vice President Academic in Academic Council as being so concerned for her students that she would find ways to help them regardless of what strict interpretation of the regulations indicated. There is much significant data in that observation that may not be appreciated or utilized by the university as a whole. [This person] is not unique among tutors. (16.2)

The tutor mentioned in this dispatch has tutored Athabasca University courses for the past ten years. Over this time, she has been consistently responsive to students, conversant with organizational regulations and changes and active in the affairs of the organization. All of this is accomplished as she conducts a busy life as wife and mother. She is not alone, as the excerpt suggests. Many tutors perform at an extraordinary level. As one academic commented:

> I think the University gets a tremendous return out of it's tutors. I was surprised. I don't know why people are so motivated. I've got about 12 tutors and I have met tutors in other areas. I've just been astounded at their competence, at their diligence, at their enthusiasm. I think the University gets a tremendously good value for it's money out of the tutors. Most of which is voluntary. Most of them, I think, do much more than they need to in order to pick up their paychecks. (2.1.2.6)

In relating how they work with tutors, the key informants seemed to follow similar formats. One capsulizes the process:

> The older tutors have been here for longer than I have so they probably know more that I do about students taking courses with Athabasca and how the university works. With new tutors, we run through the way students work through the material in a sort of packaged bit-by-bit approach. Then we go over the function of the tutor in the course, about how to deal with problems when they come up and how to keep students moving through the course at a satisfactory pace. Because our courses are organized around regular quizzes, we go over the quizzes. It's mostly, I suppose, to familiarize them with what's expected of them as a tutor.
>
> There's a team relationship with that. It probably depends from tutor to tutor. I call them up to see how things are going, to hear from them, to find out what they're doing in their tutoring sessions. More or less it is an attempt, although informal, just to make sure they are making themselves available to students and that they're able to deal with problems that students have. So, simply talking to the tutors and hearing their comments, sometimes even cajoling them or helping them to get some students to get to work, or trying to keep the work regular so that students do actually complete the courses. I'm probably talking to most of the tutors about once a month.
>
> Over time we build a relationship. In a sense, we're all captives of these existing courses and have to cooperate together to see that they're delivered properly and effectively. We get together occasionally to talk about changes in the course or to talk about changes in marking.
>
> It helped me to learn how to help a tutor by tutoring myself right off. You know, when I started here, I inherited these courses and I started tutoring. So, initially, I got a chance for myself to see where the students were coming from, because we deal with a fairly diversified lot of students. That gave me a bit of an idea as to what should be done in the tutoring. And, secondly, I had a number of tutors who came fairly well recommended. So, simply talking to them and hearing their comments was important.
>
> Learning what to say to new tutors came from the

> interaction between me and the students, and between me and the tutors that already existed. Because they would be telling me and helping me with problems that would come up in the course. (2.2.1.6-7)

Tutors report to academics and are responsible to them for the work they do "in the field". As the academic cited above notes, there is a supervisory element to the tutor/academic exchange which should be conscientiously performed. However, the relationship is essentially a professional one, and may work best when tutors and academics work together as a team to provide an educational service.

Veteran tutors are reported to perform a socialization function for new academics who are learning appropriate ways of interacting with tutors. Established tutors share their experiences with newcomers and provide an important source of information about both university processes and the problems involved in delivering distance education courses. Other learnings come with experience in the setting which can then be checked against responses already devised by the veterans, or together they can collaborate to generate new coping options.

Newcomer tutors are exposed to organizational learnings through interaction with the academic, who provides information, outlines processes and relates cultural values. As new tutors gain experience, they increasingly become full members of the team which provides course assistance to distance students. In these activities, the faculty member, in turn, becomes a socializing agent. Thus, as new academics are themselves being socialized, they are also socializing others.

Creating a strong working relationship with tutors can be a demanding task. One of the respondents in this study discussed how fragile this relationship can be:

> For example, in the spring we were asked to go over with our tutors the number of students that they had and the number of students per block, the marking schedule and so forth. I have a pretty good relationship with my tutors, so I was being pretty open -- lots of discussion and arranging things to fit people's schedules and so on. They are pretty flexible too. As a matter of fact, that business of cutting the tutor blocks and increasing the block sizes (particularly cutting the tutor blocks), was done without telling people either before or after. It wasn't until we began getting contracts that we knew that. As a matter of fact, one of my tutors received his contract, which had been cut, before I even knew about it. Of course, I felt my relationship with my tutors was very compromised. (3.1.1.5 - 1.1.6)

Here there are several themes. The academic relates the institution to the tutors and in the process builds a trust relationship conducive to further interactions. An intervention occurs as the institutional department responsible for some tutor administration acts unilaterally. The split reporting lines for tutors is highlighted as a potential cause of confusion in the total organizational communication to the part time, and distant, worker.

Thirdly, there is a lack of appropriate internal communication. The result is a perception of damaged relationships between coordinator and tutor.

Implicit in the above account is the importance to the academic that a positive relationship with tutors is vital to the over-all functioning of her particular realm of responsibility. A heartfelt comment by one of the key informants supports her view:

> I am blessed with excellent tutors who are experienced and who seem happy with me as their coordinator. (6.1.5.3)

Seminar and teleconference tutors have rather different roles than telephone tutors. Although dealing with the same course materials, the seminar and teleconference tutors are working over a more limited period of 39 weeks in a group situation. Relationships of these tutors with the academic responsible for the course take on a different dimension than might be typical for telephone tutors. A key informant explains:

> I've put a lot of effort into talking to these people, because they are teaching either Indians or prisoners who I knew were having a distinct learning need. I insist that they write up a critique after they're through teaching. When I plan a course, I even add that it is also able to be seminar supportive. So that can be covered with that. I know what is modifiable and what isn't. I go over that pretty quickly and then I spend the time talking to them about teaching native groups, and then some supplemental things that they can use, like films. Then I have them go and write it up afterwards, critically, in terms of what's

> worthwhile, and then I include the results in my student manual in the section under seminar support. (6.3.2.6 - 3.2.7)

Interacting with sessional tutors, some of whom are involved with media presentations, is another component of the academic's job which newcomers adapt to. The interactions of supervising, motivating and acting as a resource to tutors are important role behaviors, and the resulting collaboration contributes to the over-all continued functioning of the particular mode of delivery.

When it works well, the academic team can have significant impact on the quality of student learning in a distance education institution. The tutors, as an integral part of that team, are treasured resources for the academic and perform an important organizational function. A statement:

> I think we'd be fools to mess around with telephone tutoring. That's the one thing that really makes us credible! And again, I don't really think it's a matter of how good those telephone tutors are, even though I think, by and large, they're probably a pretty good bunch of tutors. I think it's just the fact that they are there. (4.3.2.14)

Summary

Academics adapting to the distance education mode at Athabasca University, report that they experience some difficulty in learning to respond to the needs of adult learners. Distance students appear to elicit rather different responses from faculty who have had teaching experience in more traditional university settings. Specifically, academics indicate that they miss the dynamic exchange of ideas with student groups, the opportunity to forge a synergistic relationship with students, a live audience to perform to, the flexibility of the classroom format and the altered focus of educational centrality in students' lives.

Implicit in the accounts given by academics appears to be an unarticulated but firmly held belief that teaching "should" occur in a classroom, very much the way that they themselves learned and were successful in that learning. IDs do not, ideologically and philosophically share that notion. A common ID admonition to other academic staff was articulated by one of them:

> My position is that you learn by a variety of things that happens in your head. How do you gain information? Well, it varies. I mean going to class is certainly one, reading a book is another, watching a video tape is another. There are a wide range of ways to gain information. But learning requires more. Gaining information is only one of the steps. My prime concern is the student's learning. And in order to affect the student's learning, I must teach. But that doesn't mean I must teach in a classroom. (7.1.1.3)

Although tutoring over the telephone is not seen to satisfactorily replace the classroom, the reporting academics did articulate some advantages to this form of educational delivery. Telephone tutoring does afford some opportunity for feedback from students, and provides some sense of a personalized interchange with a distant group. Tutoring also offers a channel to translate course materials to students, to assist them when they are having difficulty fitting courses in with other life situations, and to encourage and motivate isolated students.

Particular disadvantages to telephone tutoring, noted by the academic informants were lack of intellectual challenge and the intervention of the telephone in the communication exchange. Despite the reservations to this mode of teaching most academics indicated that telephone-teaching did work, and could even be seen as a strength of the institution.

When not tutoring themselves, academics rely on qualified part-time staff to perform this function. The faculty interviewed for this study stressed the importance of developing strong working relationships with these team members. They also indicated that there are some specific skills to be learned in orienting and supervising tutor activities. Academics reported learning aspects of the tutoring function through established tutors, through collaboration with a group of tutors and through personal experience.

Lack of students on campus, particularly graduate students, tends to detract from the gamut of scholarly activities that academics feel are important to their professional growth. Combined with a situation where there is often only one academic to a discipline, there are relatively few opportunities within the organization for academic stimulation. The academic cited above goes on to state:

> There's not enough to compensate for that in the present position because I have no colleagues. It was never a problem for me when I was just a tutor because I had lots and lots of interaction with the people at the University of Alberta, and that's all I needed. I mean, it's not that I need to go rushing off to conferences or anything like that. It's just that the combination of only dealing with home-study students and the lack of colleagues is pretty hard. (3.1.1.2)

Administrators tend to be aware of this factor, but feel these lacks of students and colleagues are situational problems which academics themselves must cope with. An administrator comments:

> Anybody who needs students to regenerate isn't going to get that here! (10.1.1.7)

Another administrator emphasizes the more isolated nature of academic work in a distance education environment:

> Given that you're trying to develop a university sort of atmosphere on a campus where there are no students, where there's very seldom more than one other person, if you're lucky, in your field, then you're engaged in a sort of private work. (11.1.1.9)

"Engaged in a sort of private work" is a statement which seems to capture the flavor of many of the academics' perceptions of their role as distance teacher. Not only is the student isolated, but so is the instructor who has fewer opportunities to seek support. Apparently, from the reactions of academics in this study, the teaching function in distance education is less than a satisfactory activity, particularly when compared to the dynamism of the classroom.

Administration

Earlier, it was suggested that teaching activities for academics at Athabasca University could be divided into two role functions: course development, and course delivery. Examining these role activities in the discussion to this point, it becomes apparent that there is a third element in the mix which constitutes the teaching role: administration.

The following section will discuss the academic's role as an administrator at Athabasca University. Attention will be given to the nature of administrative duties in relation to the total organization, individual course management, and committee work.

Administering Within the Organization

When engaged in course development, academics interact with a course team drawn from members of various departments. As such they form a linchpin function (Likert, 1961) which cuts across hierarchical boundaries and brings divergent expertise to bear on accomplishing a production goal. As well, the academic often operates as manager of course development in a particular instance (and is so formally named in all accompanying documentation), liaising with other organizational elements of the production and information dissemination process. New academics at Athabasca University learn these processes largely through being involved in the course development process as was discussed earlier.

In course delivery, the academic forms a primary work team with tutors, and a secondary work group with other members of the organization who are also involved in creating and maintaining the delivery system. These activities also involve information exchange, liaison and coordination. Incoming academic staff develop a "feel" for the appropriate interactions.

> I think I feel responsible for the instructional materials and the quality of the instructional materials. In a sense, I feel, in some ways, that I'm delivering a product to the tutors, a course package and the evaluation and assessment associated with it. I feel that I also am responsible for monitoring the performance of tutors as well as I can, assuring that the students do get access to tutors within the limits of resources available at the university. To coordinate, well, in my own case, the use of tools by the tutors such as the TRIX system to try to do what I can to make it effective and proven. And finally, I think, to really keep an eye out for costs. That's important. It hasn't been important, but it is now. (5.1.1.17)

An ID contributing to this study compared these aspects of an academic's role at Athabasca University with what he understood of the academic role in other Universities:

> We come to an office to work and we have more of a "nine to five" mentality. That varies considerably for individuals, but overall, most of the people around you come in at 8:30 or 9:00 and they leave at

> 4:30 or 5:00. And then they work at other times based on workload and interest. That's basically true at other universities as well but it doesn't tend to be true of the schedule of a traditional faculty member, in terms of his work schedule. We have to organize ourselves around more people. We're less independent by design. That will always be true. We're less independent from our students, because they're not on a particular schedule. We're less independent from our colleagues because we work more closely together. I mean, you're forced to work with people here that you never see at other places. Occasional instructional designers, the frequent editor, the ever-present administration including media services, computer services, the library, copyright editors, tutors, tutor managers, managers of tutor managers. I mean, it's incredible. It's an incredible experience. Not incredible, but it's a credible experience -- an amazing experience, I should say. (8.1.4.7)

By the organizational design of Athabasca University, then, academics shift the focus of their attention from certain relatively independent schedules and interactions typical of a traditional institution to a more interactive, group production mode constrained by organizationally imposed rules schedules. Continuous working relationships exist with other academics, professionals and support staff as business is done, decisions are made and policies implemented.

The report reproduced above also suggests a view of Athabasca University as tending to emulate certain aspects of a business environment rather than duplicating a representation of a traditional academic setting. This academic points to the "nine-to five" mentality, the flexibility of schedules to accommodate client groups, the matrix model of group interaction and the production-driven modes of interaction as examples of a "business" orientation. Another academic refered to the language used in organizational discourse as a further reflection of an evolving "business" metaphor to describe some of the activities at Athabasca University.

> I think that business metaphors have permeated our thinking to such an extent at this point that people have willfully begun to think and talk that way. But you keep reminding people that you don't talk about students as being financial liabilities and that sort of thing. (3.1.2.2)

This academic does not indicate how students might be thought of as other than "financial liabilities". However, an inference might be made that, at least for this academic, the emphasis on budgetary considerations as they affect every aspect of student interaction is an alien and uncomfortable concept.

In these last two selections a conundrum is suggested. The university is a university -- the university is a business; and it is both of those and neither of those. Athabasca University is a university by Government Order-in-Council, capable of offering university-level courses and bestowing degrees. It is also a business which produces courses through a production line and attempts to meet the needs of its client groups. Athabasca University itself, has yet to define or articulate these differences to this point. Adjusting to the dual nature of the organization as both a university and a business is a socialization challenge in itself, particularly for academics long accustomed to life in more traditional universities where they may have evolved certain fantasies of the constitution of the "ideal" university. As the above excerpts suggest, some find the differences exciting and interesting; others find the same differences deplorable.

Another business-related activity that shapes interactions at Athabasca University is the necessity of reliance on technological systems for rapid and efficient information flow. Varieties of information must be processed and made available on a daily basis so that the organization can coordinate its internal and external functions. Students are registered and assigned to tutors, marks are processed, course materials are sent out and the inventory adjusted, seminar and teleconference courses are begun and ended, contracts are awarded and terminated, guidelines are exchanged with cooperating institutions.

The need to develop efficient information systems often occurs only after an organization has become dysfunctional to some extent. If the organization engages in business-related activities, it does not automatically follow that the organization is notably "business-like" in its operations. One of the key informants saw this as a serious problem:

> I don't know the details of the problem but another thing has to be this whole business with our systems; our computer systems, registry, the information that tutorial gets. I mean, to me, those problems are so bad. They're not bad but they stop us from being excellent to such a degree that we should actually be pushing to be better than the systems are aiming at. People in Tutorial should be able to put those screens up in the morning and ask themselves all sorts of questions like "How many students are there in such and such a course?" Or get lists of whatever they need and they should be able to look at those and just know, as a matter of habit, that they've got the right information. And the minute you see somebody, again using Tutorial for an example, getting lists like that and spending a lot of time modifying them to fit the situation as they know it, it's just a clear signal that systems aren't working. And I think until we get real top-notch systems, where everyone along the line really believes that the information they've got is the real information, we're just not going to be efficient. So it's really a systems thing. And, I guess, what I've really been talking about is coordination. Coordinating through the productions systems and we're also trying to coordinate just the information flow. (4.3.2.5)

Course Management

Of course, the level of efficiency of the organization also impacts on the managerial work of the academic who must coordinate information in a timely manner in order to maximize the effectiveness of his or her sphere of responsibility. Not only is something lacking in total systems efficiency, but also in systems which academics use to monitor their own areas. A newcomer expressed his confusion:

> I have to make up a system. The tutors are phoning me for their student's marks. I didn't keep a list and [the secretary] hasn't had time to post them

> yet. The tutors are used to this kind of service and I just haven't been able to give it to them. (14.1.2.87)

In the instance this academic speaks of, a system was in place, but it took him some time to recognize the value of either using it or of adapting it to meet his own needs. Later he indicates that he had some difficulty accepting these responsibilities as part of his personal work activities, anticipating that they would be the province of support staff. His mind set did not change until he found himself in some difficulty with complaining tutors who expected a level of support from him they were not getting.

Other academics do not come to a ready-made set of courses which they may take responsibility for. These individuals are expected to design course management systems of their own. Many academics tend to create methods for tracking students and storing information, with varying degrees of retrievability, for themselves, with little coordination among systems. While this idiosyncratic approach may reflect a comfortable situation for some academics concerned, perhaps, with professional autonomy, for others the lack of clear procedures causes some dismay:

> Half of me wants to develop a model to administer, as opposed to going on the basis of trial and error. What you have is IDs who are eminently trained for this kind of stuff. Fresh out of their disciplines. They are drilled in working and details in and around learning. In their bitterness, they just turn in on themselves and their delivery system is highly organized. If you ask them they might give

> you some tips, but they're reluctant. It's, "I developed this, now you go and develop your own". (1.1.2.9)

This person was looking for efficient systems of course management he could tap into directly. Other academics have adopted a more pro-active approach. Perhaps the most outstanding example is related by a faculty member who helped develop a computer program, shared by tutor and coordinator, for tracking student progress.

> I feel that the TRIX system has really got great potential for being valuable to the institution. I hope that it can be made valuable to the tutors, and again, the jury is out, there. But, I at least feel good about the fact that it's being tried, that the experiment is being run, that systems are in place, feed-back mechanism systems, I should say, are in place for improving it. The evaluation process of it is underway in a really, I feel, very significant way by Institutional Studies. It will be the very first time that any piece of software, written at AU, is being evaluated. In fact, TRIX is the only piece of software that was conceived, designed, written and is being evaluated at AU. O.K. Now I played a role in that, all the way through. (5.1.2.5)

Thus, at least one academic has taken a direct role in establishing a management process with potential for system wide application. Likely, as the organization grows and becomes increasingly specialized, necessity will drive the installation of more and better systems.

Information systems at Athabasca University include paper distribution and processing. A respondent spoke of this aspect of organization at Athabasca University:

> We're a very paper-based organization. We do lots of memos, briefs, documents, communications, agendas. I mean, Cripes, all you have to do is go on one of the committees and get a book in the mail every three weeks to know somebody writes all that stuff down. (8.1.4.9)

There are probably four main reasons why Athabasca University could be termed a paper based organization. Committees meet and generate paper while maintaining the infrastructure and forging responses to new circumstances surrounding the establishment of a distance education facility in Canada. As well, as component parts of the organization at Athabasca University participate in developing courses and contributing to their delivery, information flows from one department to another in order to coordinate the processes. For example, a student is registered by one department and course materials sent out by a second department. Tutorial assigns a tutor and then sends pertinent information to the tutor and the course coordinator who monitor student progress through written reports. Examinations are requested, distributed and collected by another sub-department, evaluated by the faculty member and returned to registry. Finally, Institutional Studies gathers relative data, analyzes it, and relays the results to decision-makers.

Thirdly, at Athabasca University, most policies are made and controlled centrally from the main office in Athabasca, but many aspects of implementation are decentralized to accommodate the operations of regional offices which duplicate many core services.

Finally, students and tutors are external to the physical boundaries of the organization. Thus, their main mode of communication is conducted through a written channel, usually processed through some form of mail.

The "tyranny of the mail" is a phrase which could be coined to describe the volume and, frequently, the immediacy of the twice-daily delivered paper which is the lot of the academic at Athabasca University. When recently I met an academic in the hallway who has only been at the university for three months and asked how she was doing, she replied:

> I can't believe it. I've been away for 10 days and I have enough work piled up in my mail for thirty people. (17.10.14.87)

Most academics report that dealing with the daily influx of paper to be responded to in some way is a daunting task that consumes too much time and energy. A typical comment:

> I spend far too much time shuffling paper when I ought to be doing creative things as a scholar. I find it very frustrating. I try, purposely, to do as little administrative work as I can while still carrying my load. It's a treadmill here. You never get a chance to get out from under. (6.1.5.3)

One of the IDs reflected on this aspect of the faculty role:

> My question is, "how do we most effectively use our resources?" People are very important. They are

> also very precious and expensive resources. So we shouldn't waste them. We shouldn't make people shuffle papers. (7.1.1.3)

Again, the implicit statement reflected by this academic may be "why are there not more effective and efficient human and technological systems in place to reduce the amount of relatively unproductive time spent on the 'paper chase'?"

As organizations grow and become more complex, they tend to become increasingly formalized (Hall, 1987). Perhaps most educators are confronted with increased formalization in the information age where there are increased requirements for coordination and control through communication systems. Likely, the necessity for formalized systems is particularly true at Athabasca University which is a relatively young but complex institution with few precedents to follow. However, as in any change situation, people tend to resist change either through fear of the loss of the known and tried, or concern over personal loss (Robbins, 1986). Thus, the hesitancy of most academics to actively seek change in technological procedures is understandable.

One of the inescapable aspects of the "tyranny of the mail" is the responsibility academics have to mark papers and exams as quickly as possible. Students who hand in submissions to be graded are subjected to the the vagaries of the mails as their work wends its way to and from the central office in Athabasca. They also wait while the internal processes involving various personnel take place. Understandably, students are anxious to receive feedback on their progress, and are often hesitant to proceed with their courses until they have some indication of how they are doing. If student papers remain unattended for an inordinate amount of time on an academic's desk, the "turn around" time may be significantly extended.

Neither the organization nor the academic staff look benevolently on the undue extension of "turn around" time. A somewhat apocryphal story is told about one academic who was eventually released from employment at the university:

> I got to know a few things. I know that in that last year he was at AU he was in so seldom that they had to open his office and shovel stacks of mail that had accumulated -- assignments and exams and things, tilting over from their own weight. (6.2.1.3)

Marking the same examinations, virtually daily, over the span of the entire year, is not a particularly attractive aspect of the job for most academics.

> I'm grading for seven courses and the hours that I spend sitting there -- they could hire a marker. I'm paid here as high-priced help and I use at least 75% of my time on something that somebody with an awful lot less training and experience could do. (6.3.2.9)

Seventy-five percent of time spent on marking may or may not be an exaggeration for this fellow's workload. However, the sources of assistance for the grading task are limited.

Given Athabasca University's role as an undergraduate school with no on-campus students, such positions as Teaching Assistants do not exist. Tutors sometimes assist with the marking, particularly the grading of assignments and quizzes, but budgetary pressures are placing increasing restrictions on this assistance option for academics.

At least one very new academic bemoaned the lack of administrative support:

> I find myself spending all my time doing things I always thought the support staff was there to do. I find myself frustrated and depressed. There are all sorts of things I would really like to do. When I came here, I didn't expect I'd be doing all this marking and record keeping. I thought that stuff was done by other people. It's been a real shock to me to find out I'm the only one to do it all. (14.1.8.87)

Those are the words of an individual who is working in an academic position for the first time, having spent over ten years in industry. The view expressed here is probably naive, particularly given current budgetary restraints which restrict the hiring of support personnel. However, his statement does point to the rather rude shock many academics receive when first encountering the volume of the administrative load.

Secretaries can assist in such activities as weighing and averaging marks, but their direct involvement, even if they had the time available, would likely constitute dubious ethical practices. The question of the kind of help secretaries can best provide academics in the area of course delivery is an unsettled issue for some academics. One commented on this problem:

> I figure a secretary could do a lot of the delivery work that I have to do. And that's a "grey" area. How we use secretaries, and then at times, the quality of the secretaries that we are given also. Well, it's been a "grey" area ever since I've been here. There is not a well defined area of job description to support academic staff. The energy is more -- the less you ask of secretaries the better. (1.2.1.8)

The bottom line here is that central marking of examinations in an academic's responsibility at Athabasca University. From the organization's perspective, exams centrally distributed, consigned and marked contribute to the integrity of the examination procedures at Athabasca University.

Hughes (1958) refers to the "dirty jobs' role incumbents are required to perform, but which are not generally taken into account or are downplayed when the dimensions of a desired career are considered. Most academics in this study appeared to agree that marking could be considered a "dirty job", albeit a necessary job. When speaking of his role at Athabasca University, one participant said:

> The marking is a bit of a pain, but I don't think it compares too unfavorably to a regular university in terms of time. In my priorities, course management comes way down the list. Course management is largely marking exams. Whatever sort

> of list you can come up with, you put that at the bottom. (2.2.1.5)

Marking is considered a considerable "pain" by other academics and is regarded as a drain on personal resources. As an academic activity it is low on most people's personal priority lists, but high in the organization's priorities. The brand-new academic mentioned before recounts his first days:

> Yesterday, no lie, I spent three hours giving written feedback to a student on an assignment. I'm getting better at it though, because today it only took me an hour. I can reduce that time a little more as my systems get better, but if I'm going to give service to the student (which is definitely the message around here, and something I really want to do) there is still a considerable amount of time I have to spend to give the student what I think is the right kind of feedback. The problem is, there isn't time to do anything else. I haven't put my red pencil down for three weeks. And there are all those other things that I really want to do that are high on my priority list. (14.1.8.87)

Approximately 600 students per year and nine telephone tutors are involved in the three courses that the academic quoted above is responsible for. With these courses, seminar and teleconferenced offerings will occur at least four times a year in eight or more locations such as various prisons, small towns in Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as Edmonton and Calgary. In addition, each of these courses has a one day or weekend seminar component offered regularly throughout the year to home study students wishing to take advantage of this enrichment opportunity. Arranging and coordinating these activities is part of this academic's responsibilities as well as the marking of all examinations (three in two of the courses, none in the other). Although the workload is unequal across the professorial staff, this example will serve as an indication of the type and dimension of this aspect of administrative work.

That marking does not compare "too unfavorably" with similar duties at more traditional universities is not a view widely shared by other academics who tend to point to the "treadmill" aspects suggested by a previous informant. The "day in, day out" aspect of year-round marking seems more wearing than the actual volume at any one time.

From these accounts it appears that incoming academics at Athabasca University find that the administrative features of their new positions consume considerable time and energy. Perhaps the general view is summed up by one of the academics who commented:

> Maybe I'm not very efficient, I don't know. But I find myself extremely busy, day to day -- details concerning how seminars are running, just keeping the courses going, working with tutors, marking and whatnot. These things just keep me going all of the day. (3.1.1.9)

In general conversation, many academics other than those involved in this study comment on their frustration in adequately explaining to outsiders "what they do". They don't "teach" in the generally accepted sense of the word, they don't have holidays before resuming class loads, they don't have fixed numbers of students with whom they meet regularly. Yet they "just keep going all of the day".

Committee Work

"Community service" is one of the legs of the definitional tripod which describes academic activity. The committee work aspect at other universities would appear to create less demands on the time of an individual faculty member. A key informant explains:

> The other part of the role, I think, here at AU, is the service to the university. I 've taken it seriously. I hadn't intended to when I came, but got drawn into it. I think here it is probably even more important than in a classroom based university. Because we are small. In many ways we have to have the same level of infrastructure that a bigger institution has, and yet, there are fewer of us to do the work and form the committees and so forth. So I think service to the university here occupies a relatively higher percentage of time than it does at a, quote, campus university. Normally, there, it is much bigger and you have a committee on, say, computer regulations and it takes up 1% of the faculty members and here it takes up 10% of the faculty. (5.1.2.2)

Much of the infrastructure at Athabasca University is similar to other post-secondary institutions. Athabasca University has a unicameral system which requires a level of academic involvement in the governance of the institution at the board level including Finance, Legislation and Physical Facilities. Academic Council has a number of sub-committees such as Degree Regulations, Student Awards, Academic Research and Budgetary groups. Faculties Councils require participation of every academic member and usually have their own permanent and ad hoc groups. Other ad hoc groups include hiring, tenure and promotion committees. In addition, groups are formed at Athabasca University to deal with matters peculiar to the university's unique mandate and emerging processes. Some, such as Delivery Strategies, are standing committees while others adopt the format of task forces. As there are only 45 members of the professorial staff to contribute to these groups, it would seem that most academic members are heavily involved in committee related activities.

Academics responding in this study found both positive and negative aspects to their involvement in committees. A positive response:

> Here there is so much more involvement because the University is such a little place. The university is, to a great extent, run by committees and we make up the committees. Within a few months of being here it is hard not to be on a number of committees which are deciding the direction of the university. It gives much more of a sense of ownership. I think we all feel more of a part of this organization. When major changes are introduced, they aren't something that really come down from on high or that you don't have any input in. They are things that tend to be debated, that you can have a tremendous input in, if you so choose. (2.1.1.4)

Other academics reported that they felt their participation in decision making was more form than substance. A key informant, responding to a decision made unilaterally by management, stated:

> I personally have a severe morale problem at the moment. Maybe it's because it's such a young institution. I don't really know. But I find that people are very keen on making very quick decisions and doing things fast. But I just find that very disruptive. Particularly when you just don't have enough information. My role in decision making is very up-in-the-air right now. Not much. Nothing happens unless I fight for it. For example, I'm now working on bringing my tutors back up to where I think they should be. It's taken a memo every week, because, as I predicted, the tutors don't have more time. So it seems to me that unless I'm very aggressive I don't have any input into decision making. There's a lot of forums for decision making, but they don't seem to be making any of the decisions. (3.1.1.6)

A sense of a loss of control and the need to bring forceful energies to bear in order to be heard are themes which emerge from the above account. Decisions are apparently being made by non-academics and academics are required to respond to them. The result for this academic, and others responding to this study, is lowered morale.

Committee responsibilities do tend to draw new academics into the "real work" of the university very quickly, and thus can be regarded as a strong socialization device. The socialization potential of committee participation was specifically mentioned by one of the key informants:

> Something else that helped was that I was put on a committee fairly early on. I was especially shy and unsure at first and tended to sit back thinking, "I don't know enough to be able to contribute anything". But as time went on, I found that there was really no problem and everything was fine. However, I still find myself sitting back from time to time saying, "I still don't know enough". (4.1.3.3)

A common theme among newcomers to Athabasca University is the length of time it takes to "know what's going on". Just when they think they know, they discover that there is more to know. As one said:

> I just found out that students got scholarships for courses. Always finding out something new! (2.2.2.3)

A legitimate purpose of committees is to make members aware of current and historical issues. As such they have a continuing socialization role to play as the organization evolves. Another view:

> Task force this; task force that: committee this; committee that. AUFA work, search committees. Whatever. I don't think that should be left. It's been very helpful, and will be again, in the future. There are some serious attentions given to that by management. It helps you to learn quickly what you need to know and it helps you to learn quickly the skills you need to have. (1.1.2.9)

However, committee work can be damaging to the individual both due to the time commitment required as well as the possibility of personality clashes which may occur in the give and take of debate. An observation from an academic who had negative views on both dimensions:

> When I go to a meeting, I'm merely fulfilling my duty. The main thing I have to worry about is how I'm going to get screwed when some expert works on me or in terms of somehow it being set up where I get it in the neck. There's a lot of people who get tied up in calls to help on committees and administer and things like that. That's wonderful. You could put 300% of your time in that here and you wouldn't get a hell of a lot of appreciation from the administration. (6.1.6.1)

Perhaps exhibiting a different view of human interaction, another academic voices his sense of excitement with the give and take process.

> I feel people tend to be friendly and cooperative. As a result, I think we take a lot of liberties with each other. Even on the other side of the coin, people aren't afraid to talk and speak out against somebody else. Meaning everybody participates at meetings. The damndest people. I mean, it's incredible! If you were someplace else, you'd never hear from those people. It raises the question of what's really going on here. You know, you move some of our people into another organization of a larger size, and you'd probably never hear from them. But here! You hear from them continuously. It's curious! Because they have the right to do that. Here, they're maybe a lot less intimidated and probably better understood. (8.1.4.6)

Likely, one of the realities that newcomers face is adapting their work activities to the amount of time available for their performance. An observation:

> The main thing that will have to determine my participation in committees in the future is the level of the work load. I really have been avoiding taking on anything else because I've got things on my list that I've been dying to get at since last spring and I can't get them to the top. In general, I try to be pro-active at meetings. But recently it's fallen to the point that I'm really just showing up at some meetings. I spend a little bit more time actually preparing for others and at least staking out a position for myself before I got to the meeting and that type of thing. But, yeah, I'm not sure if I'd describe what I'm doing on committees as particularly pro-active. (4.3.1.8)

Enthusiastic participation in meeting behavior may be somewhat cyclical. For example, Neatby (1985) relates the diminishing enthusiasm to contribute to innovative structures by staff at OISE as the organization aged and other interests occupied academics. Certain issues may attract an individual's attention at one time or another, or particular involvements may be valued. Too, there may be some pressure from Deans or other faculty members to provide group representation. Over the course of a number of years, the volume of committee responsibilities may wax and wane.

Perhaps some of these problems of dealing with administrative tasks can be approached by the development of new skills and strategies. At least one academic subscribed to this view.

> There's a great pressure to produce. And so, you have to become so much more effective and efficient than you ever were before as a manager -- a manager of your own time, a manager of the things you are required to do. (1.1.2.9)

At least one administrator suggested that self-management was a key learning activity for academics seeking to establish themselves at Athabasca University. He indicated:

> Another important criterion is the ability to work independently. And that encompasses time management and organizational skills. Because of the complexities of our system, anyone who isn't well organized is at a disadvantage. (10.1.1.2)

Responding to the protests academics voice at dealing with the volume of administrative duties, the same administrator goes on to state:

> [Academics] must be able to structure their time in order to do different components of the job. Because any one of the components of the job of an academic here can become all encompassing. Some people spend all their time in course development, to the detriment of other activities, and some spend all their time on committees, and some all their time coordinating, to the detriment of other activities. And that's because the job itself is not structured. You don't have three classes, nine hours plus six classroom hours and office hours that you have to have available. You're the responsible person for all that. So it's very important that you be able to work in that kind of environment. (10.1.1.3)

Summary

Administrative duties are reported to be more onerous for academics than they anticipate. As far back as 1942, Wilson commented that "Academicians like to think of themselves as free agents, and are inclined to underestimate the place of administrative functions in directing and holding together the complex social organization of higher learning." Finkelstein (1984) indicates that academics continue to report that things have not changed very much in the intervening years, with low priority and energy given by the majority of academic staff to administrative concerns.

At Athabasca University, new academic staff are surprised to discover the high percentage of their time that must be given to administrative matters. Previous experiences in the academic role did not appear to map on to the reality of the job in a distance education facility. These role functions are chiefly in the areas of supervision, production management, course management and committee work. Generally, the faculty members reporting to this study found the time commitment required onerous and disruptive to other professional priorities. A minority treasured the interaction and the opportunity for input into the organization.

Managers, according to Mintzberg (1980) have ten roles which can be subdivided into three headings; interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. Handy (1985:383) describes these roles as leading, administering and fixing. Academics at Athabasca University perform leading roles with tutors when motivating, acting as a resource, and coordinating their activities with requirements of other departments within the organization. As administrators, academics monitor tutor roles, and disseminate information to students and tutors as well as representing these participants to the organization. This information is then used as a basis for further decision making (entrepreneurial and structural), resource allocation, and as a means of coping with disturbances.

Managerial and administrative tasks are somewhat hampered by the lack of appropriate organizational systems. Some efforts are being made to address this short-fall, but systems still seem to lag behind information needs necessary for efficient, or even excellent functioning. Academics report some stress in attempting to accommodate their administrative duties while accomplishing other desired role behaviors. In particular they refer to what is called here the "tyranny of the mail", the consistency of the requirement to mark exams, and the minutiae involved in coordinating course production and course delivery.

Committee work is also a cause for significant uses of professorial time. Not only the infrastructure common to most universities must be maintained, but also new responses must be forged to accommodate the needs of a young institution with a unique mandate. Small numbers of academic staff suggests that most members will be involved in a number of standing and ad hoc committees at any one time. Depending on work load and interest, the volume of committee work may vary, but it is probably an inescapable attribute of every faculty position.

Belonging to work groups within the organization can be seen as a socialization tool. Members quickly become immersed in the current issues and, through group interaction, discover the appropriate responses and skills for coping in a new environment.

One specific skill that the volume and nature of administrative activities requires is time management abilities. Individuals must structure their time in such a manner that all job components are addressed within any one period.

Learning the administrative role at Athabasca appears to follow the "sink or swim" method as newcomers cope with the influx of mail, generate systems for recording and retrieving material, and participate as members in group interactions. Enthusiasm for administrative activities, likely not very high in the first place, tends to diminish as individuals experience some level of corporate "burn-out" and seek to shift their attentions to other tasks.

Socializers

Themes of learning the ropes in a "hit or miss" or "sink or swim" fashion have recurred in these pages. Mention has also been made of formal and informal socialization processes which have aided organizational learning for the newcomer. The following section will consider some of those who performed as socialization agents for the faculty members contributing to this study.

Organizational socialization occurs, to a significant extent, through interaction with other organizational members. Katz and Kahn (1978) refer to these other organizational members as the "role set", comprised of those individuals whose performances of their own tasks, in some fashion, are judged and rewarded by the behavior of other members. Because of the stake established participants have in the performance of the recruit, they develop beliefs and attitudes about what he or she should do as part of the role, and transmit these learnings in a variety of ways.

Groups

One of the ways that role messages are transmitted is through the interactions of the small group. Groups, according to Wanous et al. (1984), provide socialization information to newcomers, while at the same time are themselves further developed or progressed through the social learning process by interactions with recruits. Thus, the group is unalterably changed by the advent of the new member who brings particular talents, weaknesses and unique insights to bear at both the level of human interaction and at the level of problem solving. In turn, the group influences recruits to adopt their dominant values, significantly changing the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the individual.

In the previous section, some attention was paid to the committee meeting as being a source of organizational learning for newcomers. It was suggested that early involvement in several formal work groups provided incoming academics with valuable organizational learnings about the culture, the issues, the attitudes and the skills required for adequate role functioning.

Supervisors

Supervisors can have a strong impact as socializers. (Graen, 1976; Schein, 1978). As the persons who initially set out the guidelines the newcomer is to follow, supervisors have an early opportunity to imprint their views on acceptable organizational behaviors which newcomers begin to absorb. For example:

> Our Director, I think, has been quite straightforward and quite helpful in making things known and in helping me to find out what was required. (2.1.1.7)

One of the other academics reporting to this study was somewhat more specific concerning the helpfulness his supervisor provided:

> I had a good long conversation with [my supervisor] and he took the time to show me around the building and explain things to me and all of that. So I got along good with him -- that was a good impression. In my mind, it was a very good impression from that. (4.2.2.1)

The people who were involved in this study did not dwell a great deal on the role their supervisors played in positively directing their activities. However, some negatives reviews were given. Here is one:

> I had quite a bit of difficulty for the first six months because I got contradictory information about what the job was all about and how to write a course. I found it extremely confusing. (6.1.1.3) There were two credits written [on the course I was first hired to do], and I was to put together enough stuff to make a third. When I had a chance to review it, I found that it was filled with inaccuracies and distortions. It was a fiasco. So I wrote a memo to [my supervisor] indicating that it would have to be completely redone. Yvonne [a previously employed staff member] had written it with the help of Rosita [a current staff member]. So when I was criticizing Yvonne's work, I was also criticizing Rosita's. At the time, Rosita seemed to be a good person to turn to. She had been on my hiring committee, and she had interviewed me, and she was a colleague. She seemed a logical choice. I went to Rosita and she told me that I didn't need a Phase III or any of that stuff, but to just go ahead and do it. It wasn't until later that I found out from [my supervisor] that I needed a Phase III and a team and all that good stuff. So I wrote another memo and asked to have an ID and a team

> assigned to me. [An ID] came and started to work with me, then a month later someone else was assigned. I had four IDs in all. (6.2.1.2-2.1.3)

The supervisor mentioned in this incident did not appear to have provided adequate guidelines, or at least to have provided direction that the reporting academic perceived as sufficient. Communication between the two was evidently accomplished chiefly through formalized memos -- a factor which does not suggest warm personal relations. Moreover, once confused about the processes of dealing with course writing duties, this academic tended to remain confused through the interventions of four IDs.

Not realizing the implication involved in his criticisms, this newcomer turned to a colleague for help. This action had further negative consequences, one result being misinformation which led to further difficulties with the supervisor concerned. Likely, at the beginning of this academic's employment with the university, his "organizational fit" (Feldman, 1980: Schein, 1978) was seen as less than ideal. In this regard, it could be noted that the supervisor not only introduces the newcomer to the organization, he or she is also responsible for evaluating the newcomers performance and recommending that person for tenure or promotion. Thus, the relationship which evolves between supervisor and subordinate can be crucial to future career passages.

Colleagues

Individual organizational members also act as socializers. In the incident cited above, the academic turned to a colleague whom he implies gave him wrong advice due to feelings of a professional slight. The colleague in question could, however, have been responding to her own earlier experiences when formality was more loosely observed. Her advice may well have been the best she could give under the circumstances, but the perception by this academic was quite different.

An important consideration to be drawn from this account is that particular colleagues may not be good sources of organizational learning. Acting as socializers or mentors is not part of their job description which may result in a certain reluctance to allocate the required time and energy to indoctrinate the recruit. Nor does it necessarily follow that the information they possess is correct. In addition, they may have personal reasons for deliberately misleading or holding back information from the newcomer who asks for their direction, or have an inability to transmit the information required in a manner that can be understood by the newcomer. An example of the difficulty some colleagues are perceived to have to "teach" newcomers their role is given in the following passage by an academic who refers to his experience with IDs:

> I would say that if they were teachers they would train me and the others that came after me. That would have saved ourselves a hell of a lot of time instead of bungling along on a trial and error basis. On my first course I went through three IDs who didn't really care. [One], who everybody thinks is marvelous, doesn't know how to teach -- or surely as hell didn't know how at the time. Whereas this last year with [another ID] has been just marvelous. And all he did was come in and sit down and started right out. And we just talked until we finished talking. Of course, I probably couldn't have done that without the experience with [the first ID], but with [the last one] the inspiration came right away and we developed, quote, "An excellent and innovative course". (1.1.2.6)

The theme of "going through" several IDs before a compatible relationship is reached was also mentioned in a previous passage. In the passage above, the academic informant implies that at least one of the IDs lacked the skills to teach a newcomer. Personal style or personality conflict may also account for the inability to form a strong working relationship. When the chemistry between people is good, this faculty member infers, then the relationship is solid and the work produced is satisfactory. The ID mentioned above who achieved such positive results was also highly regarded by another key informant.

> He loves arguing. I mean, he comes in here occasionally on his own and flings out a provocative question. He would cheerfully take either side of it. O.K. Well, when that's translated, what I wanted to do is to understand how these courses were put together. So I wanted to know. And I found out he had some things about learning that I wanted to know. So I created a relationship with him that I think worked because it was honest and had a lot of trust in it. And neither one of us could afford to be stupid on any given day without having it held against us. We could challenge each other, get

> very irate and deep. (6.3.2.3)

Referent power (French and Raven, 1960) is a term that might be applied to this relationship. The term "referent power" refers to the extent to which subordinates identify with a formal or an informal leader. Referent power depends upon the personal characteristics of the leader and does not depend directly upon the leader's formal organizational position. In this sense, the ID mentioned above became a leader in the eyes of two of the reporting academics. Not only did the ID have important job-related information he was glad to share, he was able to transmit it in an exciting and challenging manner devoid of overtones of threat. As well, it appears that personal relationships were created through implicit and explicit expressions of mutual admiration for expertise and ability.

IDs frequently accept a socializing role as a sort of quasi-formal aspect of their work with new staff members. It is a formal role in that they are individuals most likely to be assigned to work with a newcomer shortly after the hiring. It is informal in that ID involvements with newcomers are as team members without overt intimations of performing as controllers or tutors. An ID explains her motivation:

> First of all, the institution as it exists is our discipline. That is, distance education is part of the Instructional Developer's discipline. It is a real live laboratory of the application of the

> principles of our study. (7.1.1.1)

Thus, the IDs have a stake in influencing newcomers to accept the principles of instruction which they themselves espouse.

Editors also adopt a quasi-socializer role to some extent as well. Two comments:

> The only thing that saved me was having an editor who did know the ropes. Nobody even attempted to teach me. (6.3.2.9)
>
> My [first] course is so much better than it would have been had I just written it on my own. I had the enviable position of having just a great editor. (3.2.3.2)

In the first instance, the editor actually performed many duties, while the academic learned through observation. In the second instance, the editor worked more closely with the beginning academic, lending expertise throughout the process.

The unfortunate incident of a colleague offering poor advice on organizational processes related by an academic in a previous passage, seems to have been an unusual occurrence. More often, colleagues did provide a rich source of organizational learning for the academics interviewed for this study. One account:

> The major influence on me of how I do things was Darrin. He was my coordinator when I started as a tutor. He's very, very committed to service to the

> students. It's not just that he was my coordinator, but because I thought he was doing such a good job at that that he influenced me so highly. Of course, there were others. But I would say that he was the major influence, and I would even say inspiration. I just learned a lot from Darrin about what systems he used to keep track of the student's progress. Of course, I learned from him how to interact with tutors, and how he explained what the tutor's job was and the sorts of things that he stressed that a tutor should do. I don't know how he's done all the things that he has done with those radio broadcasts and research and writing all those courses. He has very good judgement. Other than him, it's been mostly people in the humanities (I suppose, largely, because that's the area that I'm in). Secondarily to Darrin, there's been Alphonse and Raelynn. From Raelynn I learned more about political things such as how to get things done in the university--what sorts of committees are important, how to deal with the decision making process, how to get things done. Other secondary influences were--like Tom--because I think he has good ideas about things which should be done. (3.1.2.2)

This was the only account given by respondents to this study of a mentor-like relationship with another faculty member. The erstwhile supervisor in this account provided the newcomer with models of acceptable behavior and coached her in specific job duties. A previous relationship had been formed between the two as full-time coordinator and part-time tutor. When she came to the university to take up her own full-time responsibilities, her previous supervisor took her in hand, explaining the systems and at the same time inspiring her with his dedication to student service. The newcomer also came to admire the "old-timer" for his academic work and for his contribution to distance education. The relationship was a powerful positive socializer for this academic.

In the account by the faculty member cited above, other colleagues were "secondary influencers", most notably in the area of political sophistication. With this kind of support, the informant academic adapted to basic features of her new role relatively painlessly. As a part-time employee before becoming a full staff member, this individual would already know some organization people. Some level of familiarity may have made them more easily approachable in her estimation, and perhaps have caused them to be more readily forthcoming with assistance. A stranger, encountering the same group, might not have the same opportunities.

Networks

Information regarding the work environment and those who inhabit it, is typically available through informal channels. In some instances, a work relationship leads to more informal introductions to other organizational members. For example:

> First, there was George, who was so intellectually honest. Then Jake. We became friends very quickly. That was very good for me. My marriage was breaking up then and Jake had been through that. That was very helpful. Then, through George, you and I connected. Then Babs was pulled in. We had those Friday afternoon meetings, and that was neat. Sort of moral support. An opportunity to say and share things you couldn't or wouldn't on the job with your colleagues or the boss or bosses. Gerry Reimer came along shortly after and that became a good connection. Not as intimate or deep as it is, say, with George or you. Tom Singleton -- I connected

> with him at that time also. That's been a good connection. It remains so, and it grows. (1.1.2.4)

A network of colleagues is formed in this account. An initial friendship develops through a work-related connection where the newcomer discovers admiration for a personal quality he perceives in the co-worker. Friendship follows, and through that connection others are drawn in. The members of the networking group offer each other "moral support" and a forum to exchange private views concerning their efforts to cope with the organization. As the network remains in place, the interactions grow and become deeper.

Networks are also formed through propinquity or the physical juxtapositioning of people which encourages informal exchanges as people meet naturally in the course of their every-day activities. One reporting academic explains:

> And then the ever-present hall discussions -- the learning of scuttlebutt. For example, there is Jake. He's next door. But he's also a very nice fellow. Again, a lot of it comes back to the notion that because we are constantly involved in changes -- where the university is going -- rather than my work [in one field] and his [in another] there is a lot in common to talk about. (2.1.1.7)

The academic who related the incident cited above is the only representative of his discipline at Athabasca University, as are four out of the five other academics members responding to this study. The situation has drawbacks, but does engender some humor. As Jake used to say "Come into my office and talk to the Department".

Informal conversations tend to refer to academic activities only in a general way, but more interest and discussion is sparked through contemplation of more university-wide issues.

Personal Initiatives

Models or examples of behavior as observed in colleagues was another source of socialization for some newcomers.

> I learned from examples of other courses, from other coordinators and editors and instructional designers, something about distance education. I was fortunate to get on a team with one of your colleagues, McTavish. McTavish really had experience to deal with the students' mind and I thought I could do something too. You need a lot of McTavishes. If you clone McTavish in a lot of disciplines, I think you'd have a great distance education university. (5.1.1.8.-1.2.3.-2.1.6)

Observation appears to have been a prominent feature in this academic's socialization experience. In the process of observation he comes to admire a colleague, McTavish, who though many years younger, has had a successful career at Athabasca University for the past eight years. The admiration is based on observing McTavish work through problems from a student perspective and from this perspective devising appropriate course materials. Perhaps McTavish didn't consciously attempt to play an ID role vis-a-vis this newcomer but, in essence, the same kind of interchange appears to have occured.

Initiatives to learn that were self-instigated are also mentioned by the respondent quoted above who speaks of his examination of courses others had written as a source for his efforts to learn "how things are done around here". Another key informant was even more active in his search for information through investigation of written records. He speaks of his efforts to overcome the "trial and error" method of becoming acquainted with his job:

> One thing that I did, I got the minutes for maybe the past year for Academic Council and for Faculty meetings. Anything like that that I could lay my hands on. And I spent a good three days, I'd say, just sitting back and reading. I'm not sure why I felt compelled to do it as much as I just felt that I wanted to know reasonably quickly what was going on around here. As well, minutes can tell you that type of thing. I think it worked quite well. Obviously, minutes disguise a lot and don't tell you what's really going on. But I think in terms of just identifying what the hot issues of the day might be -- I can't remember what they were now -- but including the people involved, who tend to be pushing things and just generally learning what's of concern to the organization. I just found that useful. And I couldn't say that I actually used it in any particular way, but I think they just helped me understand what was going on around here a lot more. (4.1.2.4)

Reading the minutes of important meetings provided a background for this academic as he strove to become integrated into the organization. By his own account, the reading was not put to any specific purpose but was useful in filling in some of the details of the total picture rapidly and efficiently. Whereas the previous informant searched documents for information relating to a particular task, this academic turned to written records for information about the organization as such; to identify people and to begin to judge for himself the rhetoric surrounding organizational issues. In this instance, the academic actively took charge of at least some aspects of his own socialization.

The same academic took other personal initiatives in "learning the ropes". He actively sought information from people when he felt there was a gap in his knowledge or his ability to be able to perform his role function adequately. He remembered:

> I can't think of any one person that I would head to regularly with the possible exception of Anton. That's because he seemed to be around a lot. I think maybe that was a function of his living in town, that is, he is normally here during the day. And normally, when I wanted to jump up and ask somebody who knows, he seemed to be the one who knew and was also available. And close by! That's not an absolute rule, though. I do things like wander down to Course Materials and ask them questions if I wanted to know something down there. So it's more of a case of just going wherever I thought of to get started. (4.1.2.3)

It would seem that one of the points to be considered in discussing organizational socialization processes is the role of the newcomer in actively affecting his own transition experiences. Rather than waiting for some other employee to familiarize him with some of the workings of the organization, the academic who contributed the above account sought out information he felt would be useful to his own learning process. He drew a broad framework of processes from the most readily available person or persons and then went to the appropriate department for more specific details. Or, he "wandered around" from one area to another on his own initiative to find out how things worked.

Support Staff

Another group of people I have observed giving significant guidance to newcomers are the secretaries. Usually with great tact secretaries pilot the new faculty member through the processes of getting settled, working through the requisition and expense claims jungles and introducing them to the arcana surrounding record keeping and filing. Perhaps because their efforts are generally low key, they escaped the notice of most of the informants, except one. He said:

> [The secretaries] are good! And mostly because of their attitude. I think Gabrielle would be one of them. I talked to her on the weekend before I actually started. Just over the phone. And I know it was a surprise to run across someone in a support staff position that would say things like, "Oh, I normally start at 8:30, but I'll meet you there at 8 o'clock". So I wasn't used to that attitude. I'd just come from a system where that would be just unheard of. No matter how important something is, when 4:30 comes, they're gone. So I had a very good impression of just running across Gabrielle. (4.2.2.1)

An attitude of helpfulness and willingness to go beyond the strict constraints of her job were attributes of this secretary that particularly caught the attention of the reporting academic. It may well have been the same secretary who quietly directed the newcomer in specifying his first duties, although he himself is unable to make a direct attribution.

> I'm still trying to remember exactly how it was made clear, but somehow, the first week or so it was made clear that the course that's just being finished now was one that was outstanding for a long time. They'd tried it with a few SMEs [Subject Matter Experts] and it wasn't working. And it was quite clear that that should be one of the first things I did. I don't recall anyone actually saying "This should be one of the first things you should do". But somehow I think it's more a process of people just saying "Here are your piles. This needs to be done. These haven't been finished. These are yours now". Made it quite clear that that's what I should get going on. (4.2.2.2)

To suggest that it was the secretary who sorted through the job responsibilities for this particular academic is purely conjecture. However, observation of the workplace would indicate that quite often secretaries do fill such roles in the socialization of new faculty members. Often, too, they perform these functions so adroitly, their interventions may be entirely overlooked.

Summary

Socialization occurs, in part, through the interactions of the group and the newcomer. The role set, or those organizational members who have a direct stake in newcomers' performances and the manner in which they contribute to the work of the whole, provide normative guidelines which delineate their beliefs and attitudes about what the newcomer should do as part of the role.

Information is provided to the newcomer from two organizational sources. One is the interactions of particular groups or subsets which are charged with some level of responsibility for contributing to the governance of the whole. In this study, the groups most frequently cited as contributing to the socialization process were organizational committees.

Secondly, individual organizational members accept the role of socializing agents and deliberately contribute information which encourages the learning activities of newcomers. Other organization members assist newcomers in "learning the ropes" in a more casual fashion, either in a situational manner or in response to a perceived need for providing guidance. Supervisors, mentors, colleagues and support staff were cited by key informants as important individual socializing agents.

Socialization also occurs through the direct attempts the individual makes to seek information in order to affect his or her own learning. Interviewees reported that their perusal of relevant documents, self-initiated investigation of processes and observation were important sources of organizational information.

Information received is filtered through previously developed knowledges and attitudes which constitute already-learned ways of relating to organizational worlds. In this manner newcomers integrate previous understanding with new learnings and, in the process, become unique contributors to the functioning of the whole.

Chapter 7:

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In the organizational context, culture can be thought of as a system of values and informal rules developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems and which is taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1983b). Culture focuses on the cognitive dimension of social experience. However, the definition is not restricted to socially acquired codes and rules, but is reflective of the interpretive procedures people use to generate social behavior in a given environment (Spradley and McCurdy, 1975).

The rise of culture is a group process where problems are confronted, coping strategies are developed, employed and evaluated. The coping strategies are remembered and passed on to new members. Cultural development, then, is a dynamic process. As Van Maanen and Barley (1985: 33) note

> Social innovation is not so much a matter of individual accomplishment as it is a matter of changing group standards. Cultural manifestations evolve over time... This is a notion of culture as a living, historical product of group problem solving.

Thus, as newcomers develop organizationally sanctioned learnings, attitudes and behaviors, they also contribute to the evolving problem solving activities and strategies which characterize the group culture. In turn, individuals, ideally, should be less subjected to and manipulated by the culture, than given self-confidence through the culture to operate most effectively by knowing "how things are done around here" (Weick, 1985:383). According to this notion, the "rules" must be inculcated before the individual can go beyond the rules to create new expressions -- much as an artist may learn draftsmanship and perspective prior to attempting abstract works.

Entry into a new organization is also entry into a new way of life. Although extensive preparation may be made for this anticipated set of experiences, much of what is actually learned about the culture is learned through experience in the culture. The degree to which cultural learning becomes one's habitual response to the world may not become apparent until one has left the culture.

Organizational culture, as experienced at Athabasca University is the focus of this chapter. However, a consideration of organizational culture cannot be separated, other than conceptually, from role behaviors which rise from that culture. Both involve interrelated learning, change and adaptation for newcomers as they become integral parts of the continuing organization. Appropriate role behaviors new employees learn are inextricably embedded in the norms, attitudes and beliefs which constitute the culture, so that together they become "the way we do things here".

Although an individual's particular abilities, skills and motivations have been significantly developed elsewhere, applications are uniquely -- sometimes dramatically, sometimes subtly -- adapted to organizational requirements. As newcomers overtly appear to "let go" of old behaviors and demonstrate internalization of new behaviors they are admitted to positions of trust within the group, and are recognized as "one of us."

That role behaviors and organizational culture can be considered separately at all, lies in the differences between formal and informal organizational expectations. Formally, the organizational group expects certain tasks to be accomplished with a degree of competence. Informally, the organizational group expects people to perform these duties in the context of particular shared understandings of propriety and appropriateness.

Informally, the culture of the organization is expressed to newcomers in a variety of ways, at times without the deliberate intent to instruct on the part of group members. In turn, most newcomers are anxious to receive cultural messages so as to reduce feelings of alienation and to enhance their inclusionary status. In previous sections of this work such phrases as "that definitely seems to be the message around here" and "it certainly helped to be put on a committee early on" suggest some of the individual/group interactions in which cultural learnings occur.

Even a partial review of the literature indicates a rich variety of investigative possibilities into the nature of organizational culture (e.g. Frost et al., 1985; Pondy et al., 1983; Schein, 1985). For purposes of this study, the discussion will be limited to those cultural issues which arose spontaneously during the interviews conducted with key informants. In the following section, reference will be made to the language used by organizational members which indicate acquisition of shared meanings. In addition, two cultural learnings which have already been mentioned will be given wider discussion, that is, the notions of time and space. As well, some of the cultural tensions which affect the organizational learning of academics at Athabasca University will be touched upon.

Language

A visible manifestation of cultural acquisition is facility in the organizational language. Hall (1976:27) cites Benjamin Whorf (1956) as having first demonstrated that "cultures have unique ways of relating language to reality of all sorts, which can be one of man's principal sources of information concerning cultural differences".

To function as a group, the individuals who come together must establish a system of communication and language which reduces uncertainty about what is going on (Schein, 1985). Shared language is the basic tool for coordinated action in groups. The language used filters thought processes to determine category systems which are appropriate to the culture and serve as a sort of short-hand which triggers meaning and focuses attention. One form of language-in-use is the particular jargon or terminology that an organization selects to describe its processes and environments. In some instances, such as in highly technological firms, the organizational language becomes so arcane that it is virtually incomprehensible to outsiders.

In this study, the key informants demonstrated an ability to use organizational terminology in appropriate ways. Moreover, they demonstrated the ability to supply the referent or the definition for the term used. Some examples:

1. Abbreviations used in place of titles; e.g., ID (Instructional Designer), ARC (Academic Research Committee), SME (Subject Matter Expert, a term which refers to an internal academic or an individual hired on a contract basis to write a course for Athabasca University), and, of course, AU (Athabasca University).

2. Acronyms which replace other terminology; e.g., SAP (Strategic Academic Planning Committee), ISIS (Institutional Student Information Services), AUFA (Athabasca University Faculty Association) and TRIX (Tutor Response software package developed at Athabasca University).

3. Existing terminology which has acquired a particular shared meaning by the group; e.g., Coordinator (a title which at one time described the professorial role at Athabasca University), openness (an admission policy with only two formal requirements: a student must be 18 years of age and a Canadian resident), and seminars (face-to-face student/teacher interaction with prepackaged home-study materials used as a basis for learning and examinations centrally distributed and evaluated).

4. Terms specifically constructed to refer to organization processes; e.g., enhanced delivery (course materials are delivered through teleconference or seminar support), Phase III (the third part of a seven step process. The Phase III is a proposal document sent to various organizational members and external agents specifying the costs, program relationship, anticipated student body, delivery mode, instructional techniques, parameters and sample lesson for a course which, given approval by the membership, will be developed by a particular course team), rolling revisions (relatively minor changes to course materials prior to a reprinting which do not alter the course sufficiently to justify a fully Phase III process).

Language, as represented in the above examples, is relatively easily learned and applied by newcomers. Other language usages are more difficult to ascertain, particularly as they apply to abstractions. For example, the terms "excellence", "low cost", or "you're doing fine" might be very different meanings to the sender than those inferred by the receiver of the messages. Examples of these kinds of communication breakdowns occur throughout this paper, such as the comment "They told me I was to write courses. I thought, 'O.K. I can write courses'. In hindsight, that was a mistake". In this instance, the organizational group and the individual initially held widely divergent conceptions of what was meant by "writing courses". As extensive investigation into incongruent communication category systems beyond the scope of this paper, it will not be dealt with further here.

A third area of culture-specific language is the way in which words are used to represent underlying beliefs or attitudes. An outstanding example is the words chosen to signify universities other than Athabasca. Some terminologies describing other universities that were used by key informants:

> "Traditional". For example: "There's a radical change when you come here because a lot of our relationships aren't as they are in a traditional university". (6.3.1.2)
>
> "Conventional". For example: "academics come from a conventional background" (8.1.2.3)
>
> "Regular". For example: "Eventually I would like to be back at a regular university". (2.1.2.3)
>
> "Standard". For example, when asked what he meant by regular university an academic replied,

> "Non-distance education. I"m making the two-sided split between the standard or regular university, where the main focus is on classroom teaching, and distance education". (2.2.1.6)
>
> "Normal". For example: "We are, probably more than in a normal institution, thrown on our own for what we do". (2.1.1.4)
>
> "Real". For example: "A real university is one that has students and classrooms, a graduate program and degrees. That's my definition of a real university". (5.1.1.4)
>
> "Typical". For example: "Students can't get to a typical university on a regular basis". (2.1.2.4)
>
> "Way-station". For example: "There are a fair number of faculty members that look at this as only a 'way-station' to a real university". (5.1.1.4)
>
> "Proper". For example: "A lot of people are saying, 'this isn't a proper university because we're located here and therefore we don't have library resources or access to library resources. We don't have the community that we can knock around with, share ideas, test things out with. We don't have a community of scholarship that's big enough for us to sustain ourselves'". (9.1.1.2)

Some of these terms such as "traditional", "conventional", and "standard" are likely descriptors of structural and functional differences between a distance education university and campus based universities. Other terms such as "regular", "real" and "proper", more likely signify underlying attitudes or beliefs indicating discomfort on the part of some academics in accepting Athabasca University as a fully legitimate player in the over-all environment of university-level education. The connotation of these word usages may be that some academics consider Athabasca University as a sort of "para-university" rather than a full sister to other universities. Attached to these word usages may be feelings of inferiority.

Introduction of new language can also change the way people view themselves and alter the expectations of the organization. An example of this effect occured when a new President arrived. One of his first acts, with approval of the Faculty Association, was to change academic titles from "coordinator" to "professor", "Directors" to "Deans", "Vice President Learning Services" to "Vice President Academic" and "Councils" to "Faculties". These changes in terminology have resulted in a subtle shift in emphasis on job responsibilities and organizational responses (for example, a vice-presidential assistant increased his job responsibilities to include coordination of academic research). An administrator reflects:

> [Another executive officer] used to say over and over again "the worst thing that ever happened to this place was that they called it a university". Well he doesn't say that any more. I think he's changed a little bit, too. On the other hand, there are people who feel that we're not nearly as much of a university as we should be and that there's not nearly enough credence given to research. And I would say we've always been in between, but we've moved quite far in the latter direction. (11.1.2.3)

With the change in attitude came a change in titles which moved the organization toward a heightened perception of itself as a "university". With this redefinition of roles, a new definition of "what we do around here" may come into focus. Another administrator explains:

> Some of the history of the change in titles is that you guys asked for it. You were given it. Now that you've got it, you don't want it. Because the title of Professor has responsibility. So does the title of Coordinator, but on a different level. And one of the meanings it carries is, I think, the passion for research and reform. And I think that's right, because we're a university. The language changes, the language is appropriate. I think Faculty, Deans, all that sort of stuff, makes a lot of sense. If we are to behave like a university. The problem is that some people actually don't want this place to be a university. My experience, as a Professor in universities elsewhere or watching colleagues in conventional universities, was that you still had to do all that stuff. There's no difference. It's a different scale. What we have to get right here is the checks and balances between the functions. (9.2.3.4)

Some dissonance resonates within the institution around the title change. The redefinition of self within this altered description will likely take some time, and, on the part of some academics, be achieved with some difficulty and stress. It seems apparent that the change of the name will result in a change of the game.

The above sample of language-in-use at Athabasca University is far from representing an exhaustive list, but rather indicates some categories which might be useful for further analysis at a future time. However, this illustration of terminology reflects language uses which have been or are being demonstrated in the data represented herein. Facility with this specialized language would appear to indicate a considerable attainment of this aspect of cultural learning among the key informants contributing to this study. However more abstract category systems may require on-going negotiations in order to be adequately shared.

Temporal Orientations

Individuals adapting to a new organization frequently are required to form new notions of time (Van Maanen, 1977b). This learning can involve such delicate nuances as discovering the time it takes for a decision to be made in a particular organization, or determining the supervisor's view of the employee's appropriate use of time (Schein, 1985). Organizations may also describe differing hours of work, vacation times and seasonal variations. Upon entering a new organization, individuals often re-orient previously learned time schedules to conform to organizational requirements.

Academics who have been exposed to the more traditional semester-sequenced organization of time have formed strong notions of the nature of time as experienced in an academic milieu. A key informant observed:

> You don't have the rhythm of a conventional university which means you don't have the breaks -- the emotional and physical breaks -- from the job that you have in traditional places. The breaks you have are those you provide in terms of using your P.D. [Professional Development] and vacation time. You don't have spring breaks, you don't have summer break, you don't have any time away from work. You're always doing course delivery, course development. No break from that. There's a different rhythm. (1.1.2.8-9)

This respondent is reacting to the nature of the Athabasca University's production and delivery system which maintains itself at a reasonably steady pace throughout the year. As he observes, there is a "different rhythm" which requires considerable personal adjustment to accommodate. The "peaks" and "valleys" of the time sequences in a more traditional institution are less obvious at Athabasca University. Another observer commented:

> [In a previous academic position] I had a lot more flux in how I geared [my time]. I knew that if I had a busy year, I could blitz it through, and in April it was all over. Then I could personally recoup. If I'd missed out on some research things I wanted to do because of the administrative work, I could catch up in the summer and rebuild my personal resources. I could concentrate fully on my research. Here, what really the problem is, if I'm away for a month or two months doing some research, it just keeps on cranking. There's a negative thing there. I come back. The exams are all there that I have to grade. The other crap's all there. It just piles up. So you don't want to go away. At the U. of A. when it quits, it quits. You might have to jockey around a thesis committee or something like that. It's a treadmill here. You never get a chance to get out from under. It's a tragic use of human resources. (6.1.5.3)

The theme of nostalgia for a more traditional "academic rhythm" is echoed in the account above. In this academic's view, work at a more traditional university can be divided into relatively discreet "chunks" with components of the academic task, to some degree, compartmentalized.

The "Tragedy of the Treadmill" is a term which could be determined from this academic's account. His quotation articulates common concerns mentioned by a number of academics at Athabasca University -- the constancy of the duties, and the lack of back-up systems. The phrase "it just piles up" indicates a certain despondency in dealing with seemingly endless procedures. As well, his comment concerning his reluctance to leave because of the work he has to face when returning has been echoed by others. (See "Administration", pages 261 - 286)

Another aspect of the "Tragedy of the Treadmill" relates to the "busyness" which tends to keep academics in their offices apart from others, reducing the opportunity for informal interactions. An illustration of this occured recently when a statutory holiday happened to fall on Wednesday. A number of academics, for a variety of reasons, came to work as usual. With no phones ringing, no meetings to attend, no pressures to respond to, the atmosphere was relaxed. People stopped in to spend a few minutes chatting in each other's offices, small groups formed and reformed to exchange news or to discuss current issues in the hallways and around the coffee machines. Towards evening someone remarked. "Gee this has been a nice day. It was so laid back! It reminded me of what it was like during spring break at a regular university".

That the transition in time codes may be difficult for new faculty members was recognized by one of the administrators. He observed:

> For the people who keep saying they don't have time for research and they don't have time for, sort of, anything, maybe they're just in the wrong institution. And maybe we underestimate the extent of the importance to which having to meet classes at certain times and having grad students, tutorials, or whatever governs academic activity. Having, almost by definition, three or four months off every year. That those external factors become a kind of time clock and drive the way one operates. So you meet your class, you have to prepare for the class, you have to mark for the class, you have to read up in order to improve the class this year and you spend your whole summer getting ready for it. Or you've just done some research that ties in. A lot of those ingredients are missing at Athabasca. It's, you know, the 'glib' answer "But you've got all kinds of time. You know you don't have to meet classes, you don't have to do this. What do you mean you don't have time?" Well, that's fine to say and it's technically true, but it makes tremendous demands on the person's ability to organize time." (11.1.1.8)

The "glib" answer that the faculty member has "all kinds of time" would appear to be constrained by some of the considerations reported by academics in other accounts cited in this study. Specifically, academics have indicated that they must prepare rather extensively for the courses they write, that they need to keep up in the field, particularly in respect to their work with tutors and their own research, that marking is an never-ending chore, that there is a considerable component of administrative and team work, that there appears to be a heavy committee load and that students must be responded to on a continual basis. Thus, much of an academic's time appears to be committed, and relatively little appears discretionary.

It is probably accepted by both academics and administrators that time is structured around meetings. However, there also appears to be a cultural value, not formally stated, which relates to other organizational priorities. That value can be summed up as "Students first; tutors second". "Students first" can refer to a range of activities such as promptly answering student phone calls, marking papers, interacting with the registry and the like. Tutors are then awarded the next place on the priority list for attention. The result can be significant periods spent without discretionary time for course development or research. Perhaps the factor which separates the "outside" view of administrators from the "inside" view of faculty members concerning time availability is a shared understanding of the term "discretionary time".

It may be that a deeper analysis of newcomer reactions to time allocations at Athabasca University was offered by another administrator. In his view:

> What [the academic members] are mourning is the death of a fantasy. I mean, if somebody said to you "Would you like a job as an associate professor, and we're going to pay you all this amount of money, and no students on campus", what would you say? I mean, the real fright of being a teacher on campus is that "knock on the door". So, you can put that to one side. You don't actually have to tutor anybody, you can get other people to do that. So its not work in that sense. It's a darn sight easier than teaching three sections of a class. Not as much fun, but a darn sight easier. You can manage your own time. And after they have been here a year or two they are mourning the loss of that. Seemed a good idea when they walked in, now they are feeling isolated, separated... They've lost their fantasy of what their experience would be

> like. Or, they're changing their fantasy. (9.2.1.2)

In the account above, the administrator appears to suggest that the fantasy revolves about notions of what it would be like to work at another post-secondary institution. The transition from one mode of working to another, then, would suggest some level of conflict likely accompanied by a degree of doubt and uncertainty which seem to be implicit in the accounts of some academic members.

The time transition appeared to be more easily accomplished by some of the key informants than others. At least one of the reporting academic members found there were positive aspects to the time designations at Athabasca University. In his view:

> On the other hand, there are some things that can make it much more flexible. We can take our time, because the university runs year-round. If I need to run down to Jamaica or something like that, I can go. I'm not constrained by a September to April calendar year. January is a much nicer time to be away from Alberta than July. (2.1.2.3)

Planning one's own time through vacation and professional development allotments to take advantage of seasonal fluctuations or to participate in timely activities can be an attractive option for academics who are free of the constraints of classes or student hours.

To a certain extent, individual academics can plan their own time. To do so requires some skill. An administrator remarked:

> If you're well organized, you can really maximize your time here. If you're not well organized, you just kind of drown. (10.1.1.8)

The above account seems to reflect that there are a number of conflicting work responsibilities faculty at Athabasca University attempt to respond to. A key informant agrees.

> There's a great pressure to produce. And so, you have to become so much more effective and efficient of your own time -- a manager of the things you are required to do. (1.1.2.9)

The above accounts seem to indicate that personal organization is difficult to achieve, and that there are serious penalties, at least on a personal level, for an ability to do so.

At a different level of organizational structure, separate views of time also appear to exist between academics and the facilities section of the organization. Some academics appear at the building at literally all hours of the day and night, weekends included. The Facilities Department, striving to stay within a lowered budget, cut off heat, air conditioning and air exchange during nights and weekends and shut off all lights at 11:00 pm. Security in the building has also been reduced. Academics, however, wish to work without interruption, catch up on some work, tutor, or pursue professional activities beyond traditional office hours and tend to request appropriate services during those times. Some friction then ensues between contrasting sets of values -- one viewing the University as an office building which has set hours, the other wishing to pursue their work without artificial time constraints.

Concepts of organizational time take on altered dimensions for new academic members at Athabasca University. Many aspects of the job to be done in terms of self-discipline and task orientation were likely learned by the majority of academics during their graduate school experiences, although these skills may need to be redefined in the context of a distance education institution. Moreover, sorting through time pressures and establishing organizationally accepted priorities are skills which many typical Athabasca University students must learn if they are to be successful in the distance learning format. Perhaps temporal orientations as experienced at Athabasca University assist professorial staff in becoming more sensitive to the difficulties of adult learners who chose this institution as a venue for pursuing their studies.

From the foregoing, it would also appear that opportunity to perform the third traditional academic function of an academic, research, is inextricably tied to the concept of time at Athabasca University. The research function will be explored further in the section "Research" (pages 347-373).

Spatial Orientation

Van Maanen (1977b) describes the concepts of time and space as defined by the organization as being problematical for newcomers until they are able to construct temporal and spatial maps specific to the new setting. Notions of time have been suggested as difficult and stressful adaptations for newcomers in the previous discussion. The following section focuses on the impact of space as a cultural phenomenon.

Physical Location

The location of the building in which work is done will influence the way of life in an organization (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Handy, 1985). Athabasca University is located on a large parcel of land overlooking the small town of Athabasca, 90 miles north of the city of Edmonton. The University consists of one building, in places two stories tall, surrounded by minimalistic landscaping, beyond which is over 500 acres of land in its natural state. A key informant observed:

> I don't really feel that I'm an Athabasca resident as long as I'm here. This is a separate little enclave by itself. It [the University] is completely different than if it had been put down on a main street. I think the whole interaction of the town and everything would have been different. (4:1.1.8)

Athabasca University is physically isolated from its neighbors, from the town of Athabasca and from the nearest large center, the city of Edmonton.

Town and City

Athabasca University, while the largest employer for the town of Athabasca, is not visibly part of the town, but isolated from every-day activities. Nor are all academics (or professionals and managers for that matter) residents. One of the reporting academics explains his position:

> I think about half the faculty is living in Edmonton and half is living up here now. So there was no great problem for us to live in Edmonton. Probably I'm up here one or two days a week. It varies. One thing it depends on a lot is meetings, because many of our meetings will take place in Edmonton. Anything that involves tutors -- hiring and so on. Most of our tutors come from Edmonton or Calgary. I'm the treasurer of [a professional association] and most of those meetings are in Edmonton or Calgary. (2.1.1.3)

This person represents one of the academic key informants who chose to live in Edmonton and commute. As he suggests, selecting an area to live in is partially complicated by certain aspects of the job which are usually performed in the city of Edmonton as a matter of necessity, convenience, or cost effectiveness.

While some academics experience little noticeable difficultly in adjusting to the commuting option available to them, others find it difficult to rationalize. An administrator comments:

> Look at what's happening with several people. A lot of people are still in this trough, feeling bad about any decision they might make, even though it may be good for them. And part of the reason for that is the management has created that environment, in which what's good for you, almost by definition becomes bad for the university. Some individuals actually made a sacrifice coming here, and felt it as such. Then the real issues became very apparent such as family issues, not work issues. In some cases they may love being near the university in Edmonton, and getting a lot of satisfaction from disciplinary work they do there, but feel guilty about it. (9.1.1.6)

The major consideration which appears to rise from the foregoing discussion is that an organizational norm is yet to form around an accepted way of viewing the relationship between work activities and family needs, between the need to be members of a group and to be perceived as members of a group while performing many work activities in isolation, and between being part of an academic community and part of a larger neighborhood community. Another administrator sums up this problem:

> The whole personality thing is a tough one. Because part of me can see that it's good to get people that are good at working on their own -- in their own self, you know -- self-starters sort of thing. On the other hand, the whole course team concept and the notion of working together is a very social one. I think I'm kind of distorted on that one by the move. I think relocation has caused all sorts of reassessments. I think being in Edmonton, we had more opportunity and the best of both. Whereas now, we've almost destroyed... I mean, we try to run seminars, we try to instill some kind of academic atmosphere. It's very difficult. And you've got two groups of staff.

> The group that live up here; they tend to be quite social, but social in (not an anti-academic sense) but they're more into the community or their own lives and that sort of thing. And the commuters -- it's a hard generalization -- might be more academically oriented in some senses. But then, they don't participate at all. (11.1.1.15 - 1.1.16)

Obviously, some managers feel the division between the "locals" and the "commuters" quite acutely. When a good percentage of the academic staff live 90 or more miles distant from their workplace, it is not possible for them to drop in for a few hours or to divide the day between time spent in the office and time spent out of the office. What occurs is a kind of "fly in" faculty who have likely programmed their time at Athabasca with some rigor, reducing the opportunity for informal interaction. In addition, there is some evidence that staff members who "fly in" are not entirely comfortable with their relationship to the university group.

Choosing to live in Athabasca does not necessarily mean choosing to omit travel. Recently, for example, an executive officer commented that he had set a new record in making 26 trips between Edmonton and Athabasca in one week. Growled a member of the Governing Board, "We don't pay him to spend that kind of unproductive time in a car." When this story was related during a hallway gathering an administrator offered "You think that's bad? Just ask (the same executive officer) when the last time was that he spent

10 consecutive nights at home. The answer is February." Pause. "1986". Another illustration concerns the auditing firm who felt it was quite beyond their capacities or job specifications to travel to Athabasca. They called a meeting at their offices in Edmonton with AU financial officers to discuss the justifications for an inordinately high travel budget. Said one officer in explanation, "Well. We're here aren't we?" It becomes apparent that a great deal of business central to the functioning of Athabasca University cannot be done in the town of Athabasca other than by telephone. Virtually all activities which call for face-to-face meeting necessitate travel.

Faculty members are not usually required to travel to the same extent as administrators, but do find themselves involved in a variety of meetings where their travel is more efficient than group travel. In addition, almost all face-to-face interaction with tutors requires academic travel, as does coordinating projects such as the Prison Program. Another job aspect which requires travel by some academics is research. For example:

> I find that since I don't have any colleagues at all here, I don't find out about things. That means that it's really important to me to talk to other people in my discipline to find out what I'm missing. So I actually go to Edmonton quite a lot. (3.2.1.3)

Reaching out to colleagues includes travel to where they are, according to this key informant. Access to a wider range of academic resources was also cited as contributing to the need to commute to the large center. An observation:

> There is absolutely no library here in my area. So I must go to the University of Alberta if I am to continue to do research. (13.1.8.87)

One of the key informants is a long-term Athabasca resident, while two others have chosen to live in Athabasca and seem satisfied with their choice, as has been noted previously (see "Key Informants", Pages 105-107). Anecdotal evidence indicates that some academic members and their families are adjusting to life in the Athabasca area. Social communities within the town, around the nearby lake, and in some rural areas have evolved into important groups of significant others.

Others, who initially relocated their families to the Athabasca area, have not achieved this level of adjustment. Another key informant represents the group of people who initially moved to Athabasca and subsequently returned to the larger city. He gives his reasons:

> I've lived in even smaller places. I've lived on islands that were quite large and only had 20 residents. And so I've already seen what it's like to live in a small town. My wife grew up in a small town, so even though she's not crazy about them, she certainly knows them. We just found that we were familiar with all those environments so therefore we could just say we're not in A any more, we're in B, and we can deal with it. The place where we do have problems is when we try to look at it over the long term. In fact, we've just bought a house [back in the city] because I've decided I'm going to stick with AU for the foreseeable future.

> Part of that decision is to say that if we're going to be here in the long term, we just can't live in a small town. We have to live someplace where there is more access. The short-run shock wasn't there, but the long-run shock is certainly there. I think that part and parcel of the move is that if I go downtown and get mad at some of the provincialism or attitudes or whatever that one encounters in small towns, my wife is quick to point out that I only have to put up with that about once every two weeks and she puts up with it every day. To stretch it a little further, she put up with it through her whole up-bringing. I've had to recognize that one advantage I've had is I get up in the morning, come over the hill and I'm not really dealing with a small town and she deals with it all the time. So, to make this a long term proposition, I have to commute. (4.1.1.5 and 1.1.8)

Living in a small northern Alberta town is not a particularly attractive option over an extended time period for this academic, nor for others, for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is offered by an academic who reports difficulty adjusting to Athabasca on a personal level:

> I still haven't adjusted to it, I must say. It's not simply that it's small. There are things I like about it. For instance, I feel that at this stage in my life, my daughter is very well taken care of in a small town. A lot of people in a small town think that it's a good idea to take good care of children. I really like that. But as far as my own satisfaction is concerned, I'm not doing well at all. I think the main problem is that I've discovered that I can't become enculturated. I've discovered that I can't socialize with anyone in the university -- I've just had it by the end of the day. And who else on earth is one going to socialize with otherwise? So I turn to friends [in Edmonton] I've always had up to this day. As my daughter reaches an age when I would like her to do things -- to take ballet, or whatever; I don't care what it is -- I think it would be kind of nice for her to settle in either here or in Edmonton. (3.1.2.5)

This academic describes a rather lonely life in Athabasca which induces her to travel to the city frequently. She also indicates that living in Athabasca is not necessarily a long term commitment for her.

Athabasca University has been removed from the city of Edmonton in a physical sense, but many operational and psychological ties continue to exist. They have simply become attenuated, bringing new stress levels to organizational members and provoking uncomfortable adaptations to altered physical circumstances. Even newcomers who thought they knew what they were "buying into" initially in terms of living and working in the new spatial boundaries have experienced personal, professional and familial stresses.

Town and Families

Relocation has had other effects on families who made the move to Athabasca. Recognizing the considerable life changes families would undergo in adapting their lives to accommodate altered working circumstances, the University administration made a number of value statements which reflected the institutional stance on these issues prior to the move. Some of these statements are contained in the Report On Impacts, Consequences and Costs of Relocation prepared by the Commission for Relocation Planning

(December, 1979). This document states:

> More than nearly any other kind of enterprise, a university is dependent upon its academic, professional and support staff. Athabasca University is particularly labour intensive, and while the development and delivery of programs and services require some specialized technological inputs, the success that the University has enjoyed to date is attributable in almost total measure to the skills and abilities of the staff that has been assembled over the past decade.
>
> It is inevitable that the University will lose a significant proportion of its current staff over the course of a relocation of central offices to Athabasca. For some, it will not be solely a matter of the degree to which they are tied to Edmonton in their private lives, but more the fact that their career development is not tightly tied to their current function with Athabasca University. Despite Canada's vast rural regions, most of its people are city dwellers and this is particularly true of those working in higher education. Some of the current staff have no wish to live in a small town and will seek alternatives. Many staff are in situations which make it practically impossible to consider relocation. Such factors as family situations, spousal employment, special educational or health services needs are likely to be primary location preference determinants (Page 33).
>
> Quality of life is important to current and prospective staff. Not only must the job be meaningful and fulfilling, but it must also provide an acceptable location for a staff member and his/her family. Some location preference determinants (not necessarily in order of importance) are:
>
> 1. job opportunities for all members of the family;
> 2. educational facilities;
> 3. health care facilities;
> 4. availability of desirable/affordable housing with resale potential;
> 5. transportation;
> 6. recreational activities;
> 7. cultural activities;
> 8. climate;
> 9. physical surroundings of the city/town;
> 10. overall cost of living. (Page 37)

The University administration followed up on a number of these considerations in concrete ways. For example, in a memo to all staff from Stephen Griew, then President, titled Site Master Planning (October 16,1981) he indicated that the new building would include a physical recreation area to "provide modest athletic facilities" for staff, including a racquet ball court and an exercise room. A children's Day Care unit was also incorporated despite the opposition of local people who felt that community businesses would be infringed upon. However, a cultural facility and medical facilities would not be included. To further accommodate staff, a special clause was introduced into Terms and Conditions (1983) which allowed staff to maintain Edmonton offices in the Athabasca University Regional Office when family medical circumstances precluded a move to medical facilities available in Athabasca.

However, important messages of organizational behavior, as opposed to organizational rhetoric began to appear during the relocation period. One example of this discrepancy was organizational acceptance of the differences in cost of living. An AUFA study had determined that the cost of living in Athabasca was 8% higher than in the city of Edmonton and asked, during wage negotiations, that a similar adjustment be made to salaries. University administrators, and subsequently an arbitration board, turned this request down.

Athabasca University also officially announced intentions to provide spouses with employment assistance. The spousal employment issue was raised in response to a relocation analysis of the impact on spouses moving to an area where there were a shortage of employment opportunities and a severely limited labor market. Subsequently the initiative was expanded to include preferential employment consideration for relatives as well. These value statements, in particular, demonstrated the University's concern for the well-being of both employees and their families and provided considerable encouragement to families to leave established homes and jobs and move to the town of Athabasca.

The rhetoric emanating from the institution, at least in this important instance, appeared to state the espousal of cultural values expressing concern for the well-being of staff members and their families, but these statements did not match operational processes. As job opportunity initiatives for family members have failed from the point of view of many, a task force called the "Spousal Employment Action Group" was formed through the President's office. Subsequently, a brief on the subject was issued in October, 1986. Two main issues relating to group dissatisfaction were citied by the Task Force. One was that Spousal Employment Service (SES) at Athabasca University had undertaken to give preferential employment consideration to qualified spouses, support the training of underqualified spouses and network with local employers through a "job clearing house." The Task Force charges that rather than providing these services, the SES mandate was redefined to:

> restrict employment consideration only to those spouses whose job qualifications were, at least, equal, if not superior to, those of external candidates in open competition. Over a short period of time, it became apparent that spouses would have to be overwhelmingly the best qualified candidates in order to be considered for employment at AU (Spousal Employment at Athabasca University: A Brief, 1986:17).

The second issue centered about concerns for the families who relocated with expectations of maintaining dual incomes and career development opportunities and subsequently suffered financial and psychological damage when employment was not available for many of them. The conclusion, as stated by the Executive Action Committee of the task force, was that the information gathered in their research revealed a "multitude of serious problems: familial, personal, financial, professional, and institutional" (Spousal Employment at Athabasca University: A Brief, 1986:34) which can be traced to the on-going problem of spousal employment.

The issue of spousal employment is important to the "management" of culture within the relocated organization as well as to individual's relationships to the cultural "rules" which dictate "who we are", "the way we fit into this organization", and "how things are done around here". Spousal employment is an instance of cultural values failing to mesh with operational practices. Presumably, if Athabasca University had remained in Edmonton these issues would not have arisen and there would have been no need to redefine personal and family life as they interact with the job, nor for the University to make statements it could not or would not uphold in the perceptions of many organizational members.

As the situation appears to exist, however, strong tensions between expressed values and organizational behavior remain with resulting morale problems. In an attempt to address this situation, the President established a committee to make recommendations concerning an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This proposal recommends the hiring of a Chartered Psychologist who may "provide direct assistance, or may refer the staff member or members of his/her immediate family to such other appropriate services as he/she deems necessary". The objectives of the EAP are to provide staff members and their families with assistance in a wide variety of personal problems and to provide assistance to staff members who "may develop problems which affect their job performance before their condition renders them unemployable". (Internal memo to the AUFA membership, 1987).

Some of the staff problems which inspired the establishment of the EAP are directly related to relocation. The dust is still settling around this transition. Perhaps the EAP will assist both the University and individuals to resolve some of the tensions surrounding the discrepancies between stated organizational values and operational practices.

This rather lengthy description of the impact of relocation given here has been an attempt to indicate a cultural dissonance which is still occuring within the Athabasca University community. Upon their hiring, new staff members may have felt that relocation was an established fact and that the organizational transition would not affect them. Yet they are part of the present circumstances. Some agonize about whether or not to move back to the city so that family members can obtain employment or have access to a more extensive variety of services. Having recently relocated to the area, families are concerned about undertaking another disruption, and may anticipate a significant drain on personal finances.

What is implied is that the organization continues to experience stressful change at the same time that new members are attempting to adapt their personal and professional lives to the needs of the institution. The combination of change events would appear to enhance the strain of an already stressful circumstance.

Organizational Space and Professional Interactions

Many job activities tend to isolate academics from one another. This colleagial isolation is reflected in the physical design of the building. On the second floor are the faculty offices. These are rows of cubicles, approximately eleven meters square, separated by corridors. The majority of offices face blank walls. There is no staff lounge or other gathering place on the second floor except for the coffee machines.

Official policy bans attachments to doors, but some inhabitants have affixed slogans, cartoons, posters, and the like, which as one academic said, is "my effort to personalize my surroundings a little so that people will know who is in here".

Interestingly, the numbers on the office doors, while small, are three times as large as the printed name below them. In addition, the numbers are a permanent placement, while the names are "slide outs" which can be readily changed.

On the main floor there is a cafeteria which does offer some opportunity for informal interaction. The academics who responded to this study did not appear to make widespread use of this facility. One remarked "I bring my own lunch and eat at my desk. I prefer my own cooking". Another said:

> I don't frequent that cafeteria, which I think doesn't help. I tend to do my errands at noon or find some other reason to get out of the building. (3.1.2.7)

The physical layout appears to mitigate against high levels of interaction, particularly on an informal basis. There seems to be an over-all lack of intense conversation and argument or general extended camaraderie among faculty members. Nor does the organization appear to value such interaction as indicated by the physical conformation of organizational space. Thus, there is not an overt sense (borrowing Handy's [1985] metaphor) of cohesive "tribes" with "distinctly clannish" feelings. As organizational space and custom provide few opportunities for informal learnings, cultural understandings are more likely determined in more formalized settings such as Academic Council or Faculty meetings or away from organizational precincts entirely.

A further isolating factor for academic members is that much of their work such as course writing, student and tutor interaction and marking, can be done with paper, pen, computer and telephone, performed in an office away from others likewise engaged. In fact, more than one administrator argues, the ability to work on one's own is an important attribute of an academic. For example:

> I think we're talking about an institution that places a premium on your ability to work alone. Even though we have the course team notion, admittedly now more pragmatic than real, in terms of its evolution. So I'm not trying to minimize that, but especially the way we're operating now, most faculty work kind of independently. They're supervising tutors who they may not see very often. They have a lot of kind of routine sort of management of course delivery to do. And a lot of their course development is in just solitary writing or working with one other person. Increasingly, some of our more productive people are people who sit a home and work on their own computer. And that can all be very positive -- you can do some really fine work that way. But it does call for a certain kind of personality type. Some of the most effective people I see are the ones that don't come in very often. And some of the ones who are always around, spend their whole time socializing and aren't necessarily as productive. (11.1.1.7 - 1.1.8)

Three major themes arise from this passage. One is the "premium" placed on the ability of the academic to work in isolated circumstances. A second is the characteristics of academic staff. These two factors give rise to a third category, that of a perceived split between those who are frequently around the building and those who are not.

Whether or not their is a difference between the productivity of those who appear at the university building on an every day basis and those who choose to perform the bulk of their work in other locations was not apparent from the data. There was however, some discussion concerning the surrounding circumstances in which people chose to live in the Athabasca area or to commute from the city of Edmonton.

A further level of spatial orientation is the psychological space the academic faculty member fills in relation to the other academics in the same field, or in relation to knowledgeable others. At Athabasca University, academics typically experience a sense of colleagial isolation in the sense of relating to others in one's subject area. Two observations:

> The work itself is obviously in many ways more isolating because what we do is write. So we're working much more on our own than we would be at another place. Also the fact that at the moment, although we're trying to get another academic [in this field], I am the Department, which means there isn't that kind of interaction. And I miss it. Very much so. (2.1.1.6)

> It's isolating by the fact that we all work in different disciplines and we don't have a lot of colleagues. I'm the only one that actually works in this discipline and there's maybe a few people who might know what I'm talking about. But by and large, people don't know what it is that I'm doing. But I think in general, just for getting support by the faculty for doing my job in general and doing what they think I'm doing, yeah, I think there's a decent amount of support. (4.3.2.8)

Again there is mention that key factors of the job are isolating. In addition, the primary competencies of individual academics can be shared with their fellows only in a limited way. The distance of students contributes to this perception. An observation from an administrator:

> What we don't have walking around here are students, particularly graduate students. And that's what gives you the constant calling to question what you're doing and the re-direction of your research. (10.1.1.7)

The theme of the importance of the student to the academic life of a university has been suggested several times in these pages. The same administrator cited above continues:

> Anybody who needs students to regenerate isn't going to get that here! (10.1.1.7.)

Isolation from students and disciplinary colleagues suggests that faculty members are restricted in their opportunities to bounce ideas off of others or to access academic guidance in their area of specialization from other group members. However, there does appear to be some level of group support to individuals which delivers the implicit message "we're not sure exactly what you're doing, but we respect the fact that you are the person who should be doing it".

It should be noted that institutionally there are some checks and balances in that course writing receives extensive external review which tends to guard against misrepresentation of material. It is also possible that the sole responsibility of representing an entire discipline in the name of Athabasca University to the outside world is a rather daunting aspect of their work for some colleagially isolated academics.

Psychological distance is further exacerbated by the fact that Athabasca University was the only autonomous distance education institution in Canada before June, 1987. Therefore, the organization itself, as well as its membership has been isolated from some of the concerns of other academic communities. Athabasca University's position within this larger community is problematic, at least in these early days of its development, as widespread understanding of its role, its opportunities and restrictions, and the credibility of its programs has yet to be fully integrated into the larger environment. Academics within Athabasca University also have some difficulty relating their positions and concerns to their fellows as the differences seem to require an extensive amount of explanation to be understood. Fewer shared problems and understandings tend to further isolate from their colleagues both the institution and the people involved.

Summary

Language as a shared group function is a principal source of cultural information. Academics appear to adapt to the jargon and terminology used by organizational members rapidly and with facility. Other language uses, such as category systems, and language which describes tacit understandings are more difficult to uncover and accommodate to, becoming on-going areas for group negotiation.

Creating new maps of time and space may be difficult for newcomers. At Athabasca University there are significantly different time allocations than at most other post-secondary institutions in Canada. Specifically noted were the altered "rhythms" associated with year round student accessibility and fewer options for "grouping" tasks. At the same time, lack of pressure to accommodate class and student schedules on a semester basis provides academics with an opportunity organize their time, within internal constraints, in order to accomplish a variety of professional and personal goals. Some of the academics interviewed for this study did not appear to be having difficulty working within the organizational time frame while others were still attempting to organize and achieve their priorities.

Spatial orientations appear to require more complex adaptations for academic members of Athabasca University. The building itself is separated from the town, and within the spatial confines of the building, academics tend to be separated from other units and separated, to some extent, from each other. These spatial considerations appear to provide cultural messages concerning the interactions of academics with their immediate communities which seem to stress isolation factors within the tasks to be performed. Other isolation factors relate to academic matters. The academic is frequently the only representative of his or her discipline on staff and may thus form the entire department. Without colleagues or "walking around" students academics develop their departments in isolation from other viewpoints and minus academic challenge which may be available in other post-secondary institutions.

Despite the fact that colleagues and more extensive library facilities are available at the larger University of Alberta, only two hours driving distance away, accessing these resources is both time consuming and expensive. However, in matters that do not relate to disciplinary concerns other internal colleagues can provide some support. This latter factor gains importance in view of the particular circumstances where no other Canadian university is an autonomous distance education unit have, until recently, existed in the wider education community. Thus external models and responses are difficult to access and to adapt, and internal resources must be maximized in order to develop coping strategies.

Cultural tensions can be inferred from indications that adaptations to the way people relate to their institutional presence as a result of the relocation to the town of Athabasca are problematical. Whatever individual choices have been made, or are being made, as to living in Edmonton or in Athabasca, certain organizational and personal tensions occur. Not only are there aspects of the job which need to be performed in both places, but particular individual and family needs must be taken into account in performing these functions. Orientations to the neighborhood community, the institutional community and the academic community are in some state of flux. At present, neither organization members nor administrators appear to have adequately resolved the resulting conflict or express a comfortable accommodation that spatially the university has achieved a response to "that's the way we do things around here."

Research

A core role of the typical university professor is research. As with other academic terms, "research" is difficult to define. Logan Wilson (1942:195) probably stated the matter as well as anyone when he said

> The meaning of research is so equivocal that almost any sort of investigative enterprise may be connoted, but academic men ordinarily have in mind the kind of inquiry that yields publishable results.

While teaching may consume the greatest portion of the average academic's energies (Finkelstein, 1984), paradoxically, professional recognition is achieved through research activities. Thus, as Caplow and McGee (1961:82) note, academics are, in essence "hired to do one job, whereas the worth of their services is evaluated on the bases of how well they do another".

Another anomaly of the research function is that the major training required to perform research activities occurs in graduate school and is not usually perceived as a responsibility of the employing university. Research activities and the amount of time spent on them are largely a matter of personal choice, influenced by the rewards of such an involvement (de Rome, Boud and Genn, 1985).

That academics have more choice in their attention to research in no way diminishes the importance of such activity. Research pursuits bestow prestige and status on both the individual conducting the research and on the university employing that academic. The professor who creates knowledge attains leverage, while the institution gains status and draws students, in part, through the research-generated prestige of their faculties (Neatby, 1985). Currently, the research function is becoming increasingly important as universities, faced with declining public support, vie for external funds for research projects which will serve industry and society (Blume, 1982).

Review of the literature reveals a great deal of tension surrounding the research function of academics in post-secondary institutions (e.g. Wilson, 1942; Caplow and McGee, 1961; Haim, 1981; Blume, 1982; Lonsdale, 1983, Corcoran and Clark, 1984; de Rome et al., 1985). As an investigation into "how do we do things", research related matters continue to be a source of cultural conflict in the global society of post-secondary education.

Many of the same issues that affect the larger community in regards to research are present at Athabasca University. In particular, significant parallels exist between barriers to research at Athabasca University and at other Canadian universities which, because of their size or distance from metropolitan centers, do not provide the facilities and incentives for research usually available to the scholar at larger universities. A review of the "Report of the Consultative Group on the Needs of Scholars at Small Universities" in the CAUT Bulletin ACPU (May 1979) notes that at these smaller institutions:

> Advanced research is often hampered by heavy undergraduate teaching loads, by absence of graduate programmes, by underdevelopment of library resources, by shortages of internal funds, technical resources and support staff, and by lack of peer stimulus. Also, small universities tend to expect the academic to function primarily as a teacher rather than as a scholar, placing a premium on pedagogical rather than research abilities.

Most of the barriers to research activities mentioned in this article have been reported throughout this paper as applying to research functions at Athabasca University. A key informant reflects these similarities:

> I don't think that disciplinary research should be an important component of AU. It has no graduate program. It has no graduate students. It doesn't even have, on campus, under-graduate students which are always important to research, at least in sciences and engineering (I'm not sure about the other fields because I haven't done any). It has no laboratory facilities. There isn't even a credible degree program at the university for the under-graduate. At least in Sciences there isn't. I mean, if an individual faculty member wishes to do research, it should be encouraged but not required. (5.1.1.4)

In addition to these shared concerns regarding the role of research, there are other factors at Athabasca University which are more situation specific. Some of these issues will be explored in the following section.

History of the Research Function at Athabasca University

At the inception of Athabasca University, "academics" occupied loosely defined positions. In a memo (August 2, 1977) to then President W.A.S. Smith, from the university accreditation body of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) recommending that Athabasca University be made a provisional member, R.J. Baker noted the confusion of the committee concerning the academic role:

> Is the University to be essentially a broker, preferably honest, hiring faculty from other institutions or its own faculty for very short periods to develop courses which will then be marked and tutored by non-career academics? Is it to be like a traditional department of extension using faculty from other departments either on an overload basis or a short term basis? Or do you plan to have a core of your own faculty making careers in Athabasca University as teachers and scholars?... Perhaps your staff should be more like the area editors of the scholarly press, people who know enough about the subject to be able to discover and nurture scholars and scholarship, but who are not scholars themselves. Another model might be the research officers of the Canada Council. Responsible for one or more disciplines, they frequently have doctorates, they know very much what is going on in the field, they know where to go for referees and readers, but again they do not claim to be ongoing scholars themselves.

Referring to the position of academics within the governing structure, Baker said:

> We appreciated the frankness of the chairman of your Board in giving us his opinions on the necessity to keep academics under control, but we were disturbed

> at what we took to be a lack of understanding of the way academics work and academic decisions should be made. One of our members was reminded of the attitudes of a nineteenth century school board... Some of us had a vision of academics chained in the cellar and being rewarded if they produced a bit of content that was acceptable to editors, television producers, and visual designers.

Thus, the role of the academic, in the context of Athabasca University, was seen by the committee to be very much in flux, and would continue in flux, pending a decision concerning of "the nature of the University". Whatever that role was to be, Baker warned, certain other factors also required serious attention.

> Our concerns for the understanding and appreciation of scholarship are perhaps best illustrated by the plans or non-plans for the library... I should say that had you not been a public university, and backed by the Province, we would have found it impossible to recommend provisional membership on the grounds of library alone.

Academics had their own view of their role in the university and began to exert pressures to have these perspectives incorporated into the new institution. In a paper dated May 23, 1978, one member wrote:

> Are the frustrations of the 'unfulfilled academics' (as opposed to the relatively fulfilled 'non-academic academics') merely the caterwaulling of those "denied the traditional perks of office" (to quote a senior administrator). Or do the teaching and research functions not in fact go a good way to defining an academic at least in a personal sense? We argue here that they do. If denied access to these activities in the long term, there would necessitate a painful re-alignment of individual self-perceptions and an acceptance of the much more limited and limiting institutional definition of the role. "So be it," may be the

> reply (and indeed has been, on occasion), but to what consequence?
>
> The consequence to the institution of such a denial may be very serious. In publicly putting forward the proposition that the 'non-academic academic' role will be only one permitted by Athabasca, we will run head-first blinking into the searchlight of general university (universal?) disbelief. We do not control the coinage of language and in a hard world of institutional jealousy, such a university would be held to be in name merely.

The issue culminated in the presentation of the so-called Green Paper which proposed permanent contracts for all staff with the exception of academics who would be hired on a contract basis. An academic who was present at the time recalls the situation:

> There was a move earlier on to change the University from being an academic institution, which it certainly started out as being, as the earliest group of professional staff that were hired were academic staff. But very quickly, numerically, and politically in the organization, they lost status and control. I think the end point of that trend would have seen the conversion of the University into an Institute of the Open Learning type in B.C. The famous "Green" document which actually saw everybody having permanent contracts in the institution, except for the academics, was a reflection of that point of view. It was that document that actually gave rise to the Faculty Association and it was the creation of the Faculty Association which gave rise to the collective agreement. Which then governed everybody. The implication was that the University had a permanent existence, so then the on-going staff, the current staff within it, ought to also. The outcome of that set of negotiations ended completely and for all time any question as to the marginal nature of the academic staff within the institution. So that research, and the question of research within the institution was a sub-set of the role and the question of the place of academics within the institution, because you couldn't discuss or argue about the role of research until you decided whether there were going to be any academics. (12.1.1.2-3)

The founding members of the Athabasca University Faculty Association turned to the staff agreements of other Canadian Universities for the wording of their first set of terms and conditions. Under the heading "Criteria for Appointment, and Promotion" (October, 1979), in the first signed "Terms and Conditions", there is a clause entitled "Research and Creative Activity", which reads:

> Efforts shall be made to evaluate the quality and originality of both published and unpublished scholarly work. Factors that may be considered include, but are not limited to, the publication of books, monographs and contributions to edited books; papers in both refereed and non-refereed journals; papers delivered at professional meetings; consulting work and other professional activities involving research competence; participation in panels; unpublished research including current work in progress; editorial and refereeing duties; creative works and performances; scholarship as evidenced by the Member's depth and breadth of knowledge and general contributions to the academic, professional and research life of the University.

Academic status and tenure were now secured at Athabasca University. Apparently, the criteria for research ran counter to the needs of the organization and the contracts established at the hiring of academics prior to this period. A case in point:

> I think one of the things that has really changed the institution and has had quite an impact on it is the imposition of the traditional probationary review and promotion systems. There is a case I use all the time to illustrate -- the Rolf Houston case -- where he was told when he came to the university that he wouldn't have time to do his own research. He was told "You will not do research here. What you're about is teaching. Course development. Course delivery. And you know, if you can do some

> research on your own, great, but you're not going to get support for it". Then, just before I came, I was told by [the previous executive officer] that Rolf was not being promoted because an external evaluator/reviewer had said he was not worth whatever he was going for (an associate or something like that) "because he hasn't done enough research". (11.1.1.17)

Whether the research clause could be effectively integrated into the role of academics at Athabasca University continued to be a source of debate. The academic members claimed that an "anti-academic or anti-intellectual atmosphere at our university is very real", which was pitted against the exhortations of management to continue "our good record of producing courses rapidly and on schedule" (November 9, 1979). Nonetheless, a new direction of "how we do things around here" had come to the University. The same administrator continues:

> What you had was, in a context of a very innovative and different adult distance teaching institution, Terms and Conditions negotiations that were based on a traditional academic model without anybody on either side considering the implications. What it did was impose a direction on the institution that nobody even thought of. It was a by product of something that, when people sat down for Terms and Conditions negotiations they saw it as "we're faculty and this is what faculty negotiate", and "we're administrators and this is what administrators react to". I don't think that there was a lot of thought given to what they were doing in terms of impact on the direction of the university. (11.1.1.17)

An organizational cultural value which viewed academics as course developers and course deliverers ran head-long into a different cultural value of academics as researchers with tenure privileges. Whereas one cultural value sought to define academics in terms of what at least one group perceived as the special needs of Athabasca University, the old cultural value, ingrained from years of socialization in more traditional educational institutions, was brought forward in an effort by academics to deal with environmental uncertainty issues. A by-product was a cultural tension which still exists.

As academics attempted to achieve a personal level of orientation to conflicting views of their roles within the institution, they were also aware that there was still a university to be built. For example, at the time when the first Terms and Conditions were published there were only three courses in the advertised Bachelor of Administration Program and only three faculty members to develop the rest of the degree program which had already been offered to students. In addition to the volume of work to be done in a short space of time and with scarce resources, few systems were in place, and it seemed that every matter which arose was an issue or a crisis.

Within six months the announcement would be made of the University's relocation to Athabasca which resulted in the resignation of the President, the Registrar, the Director of Administrative Studies and the unconnected departure of the Vice President of Learning Services. Some called

Athabasca the "University of Acting" because of the number of individuals acting in executive positions (Spronk, 1987). Confusion, stress and distress characterized the staff during those days as they attempted to sort out their personal relationships to the organization. Meanwhile, Terms and Conditions continued to "govern everything", at least everything connected to tenure and promotion.

The move to Athabasca also created a number of staff vacancies. As a result a significant cohort of academic and administrative members were hired, the majority of whom had professional experience in more traditional institutions. Their presence would add impetus to the integration of more traditional norms in the role of the academic at Athabasca University. An administrator discusses this point:

> Research became important primarily because external evaluators said it was. I think that often happens when you buy into things and only find out subsequently what they really mean. So a very strong conservative factor emerges when an institution tries to be innovative and gets into collective bargaining. The traditional norms are snuck in, almost. But, more that that, as soon as those things are in there, then people start looking for people who will perpetuate that. And so you have a tremendous conservative force. You start off with people committed to a very innovative institution, and then you hire faculty who are more traditional, because you're concerned about credibility. And because they're the people that apply for jobs. That's another very important point. When you establish a new institution like this one, there isn't that great a coterie of experience out there. So you're looking for a History Coordinator and 12 of them apply, none of whom have ever been in a distance education institution before. So you chose one of them and you may be looking for some of these variables we've

> talked about, in terms of attitudes and all that sort of thing. But, nevertheless, they've come from a traditional environment. They bring that in. They tend to hire colleagues that replicate themselves. (11.1.2.1)

According to this administrator, a pool of potential employees, sensitive to the nature and philosophy of a distance education institution, do not seem to exist. Rather, those chosen for tenure track positions typically come from traditional backgrounds and traditional paradigms of university operations and tend to perpetuate themselves through the hiring of "kindred souls" who hold many of the same understandings. This group of academics may expect the "organizational rules" at Athabasca University to be much the same as they have experienced at other universities and attempt to "hold on" to that set of values.

There are some indications that research is becoming a more important component at Athabasca University. For example, a staff member has recently had research coordination activities added to his job description, and there is now a newsletter titled "Research News". Help is available for those who wish to make research proposals or apply for grants, with several seminars having been devoted to this activity. However, the role of research and the relative weight placed upon research activities continues as a source of cultural conflict at Athabasca University.

Among the newcomers to Athabasca University, in 1985, was a new President. One of his first acts was to instigate a change in faculty titles. "Coordinators" became "professors" and "Directors" became "Deans".

The title changes were more than cosmetic. They were symbolic of a larger reality. The term "coordinator" described academic activities at Athabasca University in terms of a prime emphasis on the functions of bringing divergent parts into relation. "Professor" implied greater status in the academic world and suggested an increased emphasis on scholarly activity. A key informant explained:

> A professor would have to be somebody that is primarily engaged in ... (I'm trying to choose my words here -- I was going to say research, but that's a bit restricted), But, for the sake of argument, primarily engaged in research in a certain academic area. I think a better way to phrase it might be primarily engaged in the advancement of knowledge in a certain area which may include research, teaching, whatever the case may be. I've never thought about this, actually. I just said "Now I are one." (4.2.2.6)

"Now I are one" has not been an easy transition for some of the academics at Athabasca University. An observation by a key informant:

> It's changing a little bit now with the emphasis on research. A lot of the academics around here are scared spitless. Some of us are going around saying, "Hey. Here's how I did it, how can I help you?". Or, "Here is a grant that I wrote. You know, I've been doing it for a long time". I'm in the process of applying for two major grants. I find that when I'm in the process of doing it again, I get some anxiety. I have to work like a damn to get it together. And maybe I'll get the grant and maybe I won't. But that's part of it. That's what

> you signed on for.
>
> So that's another source of anxiety. All of a sudden, people who were coordinators, who produced the courses and shuffled papers are being asked to be professors. And we don't have a history of being a university or having professors. We don't even value the idea that part of being an academic is to create and add to the sum of human knowledge. The value that is as important as teaching. I think I've indicated I've put a lot of effort into teaching as we do it here or as they do it at other places. But I also value research. It's a hell of a place to be if you do that. (6.1.6.1)

Research, while necessary for tenure and advancement, has apparently been less than a central focus of academic activity at Athabasca University for some time. Historically established to ensure the survival of a full time faculty, the academic role was described as being similar, if not identical to that as defined in other, more traditional universities. With the change of title from coordinator to professor, a new emphasis was placed on the research aspect of the academic role as experienced at Athabasca University. Apparently the change has done little to clear up existing confusion, but has had a considerable effect of increasing tensions and stress. As other changes in attitude and structure occur within the organization to accommodate this altered reality, stress levels should reduce from there present uncomfortable status.

Conflict Between Terms and Conditions and The Job

Terms and Conditions states one set of cultural values. The operational processes of the university appear to be in apposition to these formally stated cultural values. The result is what appears to be a breakdown in the psychological contract or the tacit set of expectations managers and newcomers have for the job to be done. A faculty member points to the difficulty:

> Whatever stuff you look at, be it in Terms and Conditions which are supposed to present the formal criteria, be it the written assessment, neither fulfills the requirement. First of all, the Terms and Conditions explicitly do not define an academic in terms of Athabasca's mission and mandate. It's defined in terms of conventional criteria that prevails at other universities. Period. (1.2.1.4)

The academic cited above suggests that the criteria that define an academic at Athabasca University should reflect the kind of work that is actually done and that appropriate rewards should be available for those who advance the mission and mandate. More conventional descriptions of the academic role may clash with organizational requirements. This dilemma is recorded by the same academic who continues:

> They love their criteria of perfection and everyone else gets judged according to that. Their rhetoric is one thing; their action is another. Their rhetoric is, you do research, you publish, you do community service, you do course development, you do delivery. Five things rather than just three. The workload is such that you have no time for anything but course delivery, course development. You get hammered all to hell for not doing research

> and publication (and in my case doing too much community work) at the end of the year. (1.1.2.6)

Apparently, there is also some form of breakdown between formal requirements as expressed in Terms and Conditions and as stated in job descriptions. Terms and Conditions (1986:7) require that the performances of academic duties and responsibilities are to support the objectives and functions of the department, as defined by the appropriate Supervisor responsible for ensuring that these duties and responsibilities are carried out. The main thrust of the departmental unit is to produce enough courses to ensure credible degrees in the academic area. A key informant comments:

> AU is a very new university and the people in key positions have so little experience in academia in general that they simply don't know what the general standards are. I think that they have demonstrated it, because if you look at the job description of the Dean, his main requirement listed in that, is to control the finances and encourage course production. It says nothing about scholarship. I believe it was changed in the last review slightly, to encourage research. But the over-all emphasis is on course production. What we have, basically, is the name of a university and a course production factory. The whole modus operandi is different. That accounts for why our morale is so low here. Our whole thing here is to cover your ass because quantity and completion dates are much more important than quality. (6.1.2.2)

The previously cited academic member indicated that Terms and Conditions did not define the professorial role according to Athabasca University's mission and mandate, and the academic quoted above referred to the institution as a "course production factory". Both remarks indicate a different set of job activities than might be found in a more traditional university. At Athabasca University, academic activity centers about course production/course delivery which becomes a driving functional force. The second academic cited above goes on to explain the constraints:

> There's an amazing amount of budgetary resources that we have which go into producing a course. An amazing amount of effort. Basically, our whole reason for being up until now is having courses available for students. No courses, no students. Therefore, producing courses in quantity becomes an important activity. I mean, if we quit producing courses, media services quits, everything else quits. (6.1.4.2)

Supervisors (Deans), then, tend to become quite zealous in furthering departmental goals of course production and program development as required in their job descriptions. An administrator comments on the results:

> What we have here is a Dean who's whole career has been to develop a credible degree program. Basically [the Dean] has been perceived -- I think correctly, but I think a little unfairly when it's taken to extremes -- as putting far too high a premium on course development and far too low a premium on research. But in a sense, he's representing an earlier Athabasca. But I believe he's evolved. I believe I've evolved too, on this point. (11.1.2.2)

Although a research requirement has been on the books for at least eight years, this administrator suggests that both he and another supervisor are only now beginning to come to terms with this function on a day-to-day basis. This statement has significant implications for academics attempting to "learn the ropes" at Athabasca University over the last several years.

Less weight is usually placed on research activities during periodic assessments. At these times, academics can present credible cases for their merit to the university, particularly in terms of courses written or exceptional service to the university. However, the record of merit increment awards for research activities is murky at best. For example, recently an academic published a well-reviewed book which did not earn him a double merit increment. In reviewing the prevailing attitudes on merit increments, one administrator commented on this apparent contradiction:

> I don't believe we're ready yet just to reward people for research. But I think research is becoming an increasingly important factor in the reward system. We've made a conscious effort this year to uphold that at the full professor level, where we said we are not going to give a merit increment, a single merit increment, to any full professor who isn't exceptional in at least one area and good in all the others. So, we've denied three out of five this year. But that was a conscious effort by us to say, "If you're going to be a full professor, then we want to see research at that level". It's in Terms and Conditions that as you get higher up in the ranks, the judgement gets tougher. (11.1.2.2)

The statements "we can't just reward people for research" and "we want to see research at that level" appear to be contradictory. The faculty member is likely caught somewhere in the middle, attempting to discover what should be done to achieve rewards and at the same time mesh with larger university goals. Research, it seems, is required for achieving financial and status rewards at Athabasca University, as at other universities. However, there appears to be little perceived cultural support for it.

Promotion criteria are more explicit than the guidelines for achieving yearly merit increments. According to Terms and Conditions (1986:12), an "effective record of contribution to his field (through appropriate publication) or to his profession with evidence of maturity of scholarship and/or professional achievement" is a necessary criteria for promotion. As one informant noted:

> I just got off a promotion review committee and it's pretty clear that as long as you've been around for a while, and as long as you haven't been a complete pain in the ass, and as long as you've been published, you'll probably get promoted. And that was a complete shock to one of the members of this promotion committee because he didn't feel that was even relevant at all. But it's definitely relevant, because people have not been promoted or not been given things based on more unconventional evaluations.
>
> A group of people in the institution feel very strongly the kind of attitude that "I don't give a damn if you ever published a paper or wrote for a refereed journal in your entire career. But, if you help this institution solve some of its problems like time and space, improving the use of the media, investigating the nature of its students, improving completion rates, increasing performance levels, describing a distance learning model, working with technology, studying the future, working as a contributor to Athabasca University as an innovative project -- that's the grounds by which you should be evaluated". So even within our academic staff we have a split opinion regarding these kinds of issues, still. They still conflict

> -- and they still rub up against each other. (8.1.3.3)

In articulating the cultural conflict arising from differing views of the academic role at Athabasca University, the above quoted academic refrains from suggesting how the academic should react given these tensions. While it is clear that psychic rewards accrue from devoting energy to furthering Athabasca University as a center of excellence in distance education, it is equally clear that monetary and professional rewards are not usually awarded for these institutionally related activities. An academic comments:

> The credibility of some academics is often times based on which side they jump on or how far they jump. So some people are viewed as kind ~~of~~ a "write-off" because all they do is work on their own little projects and their own little activities and don't do much for the institution. Another group are a different kind of a "write-off" because they aren't doing anything academic, they aren't getting promoted, they have no credibility and so people don't like that. It's the rare person, I think, who could put those two things together and make it happen. (8.1.3.5)

Newcomers are likely in a position where they can see the value in behaving according to either model, while trying to walk some sort of invisible line between these competing cultural values.

Conflict Between Cultural Values and Time

For some time, the individual who was active in research did so largely at the expense of his or her personal time if they were to be considered, in the parlance of the day, as "fully employed". An individual who had fewer courses, students and tutors than the others and who did research was considered to be "not fully employed", a term used in a pejorative sense. The institution was so small, with so much to be done, that research was often considered either a selfish pursuit or a "driven" activity. Echoes of that cultural attitude still exist. As one of the key informants confided:

> There's not much opportunity to do research. I do a bit. There are some people who do that. I'd just be interested to know how. But Frank now has a child, and Russ hasn't done near as much since he's been taking care of his children with his wife in [graduate] school. I'm not laughing at these people really, but there is only so much that one can do. I'm not aware of any people with full families who are able to do much research. (3.1.1.9)

The implication from the above passage is that research is done on one's own time. There is an organizational story that a previous administrator, responding to the pleas that there was no time to do research among the other pressing duties, said "Do it at midnight if you have to. That's what I do". The staff response was "Yeah, and he never did publish much of anything during his time here".

Lack of research time has been a continuing concern for many academics. Terms and Conditions (1986:36) entitles the Staff Member to 21 working days of professional development leave per calendar year, or professional development and annual research leave, provided the total number of days taken in a given year does not exceed thirty days. With the addition of 21 days of holiday time, the academic could, with appropriate arrangements and funding, put together 51 days to devote to research. This is likely a smaller block of time than is typically available to academics at more traditional university. In addition, some academics find it difficult to take a block of time away from job duties. Recently a faculty member complained to a Dean that she still had 21 carry-over days of holiday time, but would only be able to take seven of them before the year end. The Dean replied, "I know, and I am concerned. A review of Personnel records tells me that there are quite a few staff in the same spot."

Another time related concern is the day-to-day job activities which do not appear to allow much flexibility for working with research projects. Two of the key informants observed of their job learning at Athabasca University:

> You get hammered into doing only course production and course delivery. Where do you find the time to read? Or to re-read? I have no sense of being caught up in the field (1.1.1.6)
>
> I've never really done much research although I feel I'm capable of doing it. In fact, I'm dying to get started. But right now with this course development thing hanging over my head -- it's very difficult. There is a schedule to be met and so many details to take care of. What I'd like to do is drop the course development for awhile and do some research. Somehow, I'm going to have to make time for some research activities. (4.1.3.1)

The needs of the university appear to overtake the professional needs of individuals. The resulting ambiguities create tensions and stress which must somehow be resolved.

Conflict Between Institutional Research and Disciplinary Research

To the level that research was considered an "honorable" activity at Athabasca University, there were some strong caveats on the type of research that should be done. As the institution evolved, there were strong messages that when research was performed, it should be restricted to contributions to the fledgling knowledge of distance education. The relative priorities of disciplinary versus institution-related research came to a head when an academic member, applying for research funds to perform disciplinary research during sabbatical leave, was turned down by the Learning Services Professional Development Committee (LSPD). In his memo (December 18, 1980) challenging this verdict, the academic argued:

> You reviewed my application and asked me to address, in detail, how the activities described in it would increase or broaden my competence and enhance my value to the University... [A review of Terms and Conditions Criteria follows] To apply these points to the issue at hand; staff members are appointed partly on the basis of prior "research and creative activity". They receive a permanent contract on the same basis. Their yearly salary increments depend on "evidence of research and creative activity". It seems that the University recognizes some value however undefined, in selecting, encouraging, and

> retaining staff members who do research.
>
> When you ask me to state how doing research will increase or broaden my competence, I am not clear what sort of response you expect. The University has stated that it will not appoint me, promote me, or give me a merit increment without considering my research record. Now, through you, it has asked me to explain why. On this point I am not sure whether to laugh or cry.

The opposing argument in the disciplinary/institutional research debate is also referred to in this memo:

> In the last month, my direct supervisor has repeatedly claimed in public meetings that the only type of research the University ought to be doing is research related to teacher-learner interactions in the distance education setting... He has further claimed that our status as a university stands in the way of doing things the way they ought to be done, and that too much time is spent dilly-dallying with academics.

The organizational decision made in this particular case, which is representative of others, sent powerful cultural messages to the staff. Research was to be condoned, but only certain kinds of research would receive formal organizational approval and support. Even now, that debate has yet to be stilled. For instance, a key informant noted:

> I think the university has essentially "shot itself in the foot" in many ways. It's regarding the requirement at AU for a professional faculty member to publish significant research in their own discipline in order to be promoted. And I have a strong view -- this is personal, obviously -- that this will, in fact, very seriously hamper the university from developing into a significant distance education force in the future. Why should a young faculty member who's looking for promotion, spend his time and effort purely increasing the efficiency of the distance education process when, perhaps, the major consideration for promotion will

> be on the level of quality of his/her research papers. That's a perception I have of where the university is at these days. And I've already seen, as a matter of fact, some young faculty members saying, "No! I'm not interested in an innovative approach to education, I HAVE to do disciplinary research in order to qualify for a promotion".
>
> If society should support this institution, why should it support it? My feeling is, strongly, that it should support it only because of its teaching function. If an individual faculty member wishes to do research, it should be encouraged but not required. That's my feeling and I stated that when I came. Now this means that those faculty members who consider AU as a "way-station" or as a "parking place" in order to move to a real university would be discriminated against. Under this plan. (5.1.1.3.-4)

A view remains that research which is related to institutional matters should be encouraged while other disciplinary work would be tolerated but not considered a necessary component of academic activity. The other side of the debate is presented by another key informant:

> You could put 300% of your time here on committees and administering and things like that. That's wonderful. But you don't get a hell of a lot of appreciation from the administration. Your career goes to pot because you can't go anywhere. The reality of the situation here is that a lot of the paranoia around here is that jobs are scarce. They have been, as everybody knows, for the past ten years. So you're kind of stuck here -- for awhile. If you want to go anywhere else, you'd better have done a lot of writing and publishing. And if you look at the writing and publishing of most of the academics here -- it's pitiful. O.K. So you have a bunch of people here who are academics who can't go anywhere else because they haven't done the research, and maybe they're afraid to get into it. They haven't got the grants. They haven't done all that. That in itself creates a hell of an environment and anxiety. So you concentrate on Terms and Conditions, and niggling to get a little more money here and a little more money there, because you are here until you die. And that's a

horrible situation to be in. (6.1.6.1)

Viewpoints expressed by the two academics just quoted appear to reflect "local" and "cosmopolitan" orientations as suggested by Merton (1957). "Locals" are those whose interests center around the community, while "cosmopolitans" are those who, while maintaining minimum relations within the community, are significantly oriented toward the greater society outside of the community. In the academic milieu, "locals" are concerned with the problems of the institution and choose to focus their talents and interests on the betterment of that environment. "Cosmopolitans" are more concerned with their relationships in, and influences on, the larger academic community who comprise the group of scholars in a particular discipline. Tensions between these groups in terms of the attitudes generated through their different orientations can be seen to exist at Athabasca University, doubtless creating some conflicts within the organization, particularly concerning decision making and resource allocations.

To some extent, this rather common problem of local versus cosmopolitan orientations in academic institutions, is exacerbated at Athabasca University in that public cultural value statements have been made by adherents of both paradigms, and these positions have governed some institutional directions.

Summary

Cultural tensions surrounding the research function at Athabasca University affect newcomers who are attempting to adopt behaviors and values appropriate to the setting. Incoming faculty typically bring with them understandings of the research role as experienced in more traditional university settings, and find reasonable confirmation of their expectations in the articles of Terms and Conditions.

The organization, however, has a history of conflicting assumptions and expectations about the research role as appropriate to the University mandate and mission. The pendulum has swung from few formal requirements for research as an academic job component to a situation where it is difficult for academic members to be hired, achieve promotion or receive tenure without demonstrating research capabilities. Tensions surrounding the research focus, whether it serves the needs of the organization or furthers the disciplinary capabilities of the researcher, continues, although on a somewhat reduced scale.
Meanwhile, professorial work requirements have changed little in the intervening years. The need to produce and deliver courses on a year round basis continues, as do administrative duties. Research activities tend to become an increasing load for established faculty members, and create a time management challenge for newcomers. Behaviors

and values regarding research have yet to be satisfactorily resolved within the institution. Key informants continue to perceive a split between what the organization expects of them as contributors to a new and rather innovative institution and behaviors that are rewarded in terms of external recognition and internal status and monetary rewards. Stress affecting role-identity seem to accrue from the accumulated tensions as well as those generated on a day-to-day basis.

Many of the research-related issues mentioned in this section have significant parallels in other institutions. The unique character of the issues surrounding research at Athabasca University relate to the nature of the institution. Two ideologies are represented in the debate -- the formation and continuation of a unique, innovative organization, and the establishment of a credible university. Between these two anchors of a continuum, the organization has vacillated since the time it became a distance education institution. This issue will be discussed further in the next section.

Institutional Drift

One of the themes mentioned in the previous discussion of the research role, referred to the conflict between the actual job that academics do at Athabasca University and the criteria for promotion written into Terms and Conditions. It was suggested that this conflict was generated through differing paradigms of the very nature of Athabasca University.

Van Maanen and Barley (1985:48) note that "schisms in academic departments and research institutes frequently begin when members start to distinguish themselves on the basis of differing paradigms". This ideological differentiation can lead to the formation of non-interactive sub-cultures or to continuing cultural conflict. While organizations need both differentiation and integration, as Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) point out, neither force in isolation is likely to be effective in balancing the tension in the absence of clear cut criteria for effective performance. When both conflicting forces are symbolized and sustained in overt ways, performance criteria can be perceived as ambiguous.

At Athabasca University, the competing ideological paradigms were formed about the nature of the organization and became known, respectively, as "The ID Model" and "The

Traditional Model".

Educational psychologists, hired to Athabasca University during the early stages of the institution's development, tended to view it as an innovative institution which could focus on learning as the raison d'etre, while traditional barriers to achieving learning goals would be removed. This view of the world came to be known as the ID Model which is explained by an originating member:

> There's my theoretical opinion abut how an organization like this could use academic expertise. You've got this organization, you've got these people. How do we best organize ourselves and get on with it? If you need any kind of expertise, it should be because of some functional reason. Something you're trying to do. So, in 1977, in 1976 and 1978, the problem was that we didn't have enough courses. The reason we hired academics then was so they could work on courses and design them. Is that a functional relationship between the nature of the problem and having an academic? The answer in my mind at the time was NO.
>
> Seems to me if you're struggling for credibility, you're committed to the distance learning model -- to involve print materials, telephone tutoring and so on. Basically, your delivery system -- you should get the best academics you can find in the world, pay them a sizable amount of money and produce course materials that would not only be perfect for the client, but that would represent almost the best particular book or the best particular package available in the country, if not the world. So, if you want a course in Economics, you'll hire Samuelson. If you want a course in Psychology, you'll hire McConnell. You want a course in Physics, you'll hire some Nobel Laureate. Essentially you wrap the course around that theme of interest, plus the content and the concerns of the adult student population. And you don't burden yourself with attempting to hire the best academic you can who may not have either the credibility or the instructional skills. And I say "burden" in the sense that once you've got the course, why do you

> need them? Well, the next explanation was, you need them for delivery. The answer in my mind was, not really. It's possible to do it without them. Their responsibility for the course, then, is largely managerial. And there's just too much evidence that it's possible to make course packages that are well designed, well thought out, and a delivery system that's well engineered that will work in the absence of PhD level conventional academic support.
>
> I found it interesting when I first got here that everybody thinks, or at least some people are convinced, that you can have a university without walls, so to speak. You can have it without classrooms. You can have it without conventional students. And, you can have it without the same kind of entry requirements and screening devices that universities tend to have when their students come in. You could have it with a different kind of organizational climate and in a different location. But, you can't have it without faculty. All of those things that you could have it without! And we do have a whole bunch of those people -- faculty -- a whole bunch of expertise available out there that we could tap. No problem!
>
> So I always wondered why an organization like this wouldn't say to the world "when you take a course from here, you're getting the best academic in the world. And the best designed delivery system in the world, engineered specifically for your needs". And why isn't there a lot of credibility in that? That's the question I kept asking myself. Why doesn't that become the source of credibility for an innovative, post-secondary, distance learning institution. Is there really any credibility in having a wide ranging set of more conventional-like academics in conventional disciplinary areas? Is there really any credibility in that? (8.1.2.4-1.3.2)

From this account, specific features of the ID Model would include an institution organized around learning principles, hiring the best known or most highly regarded faculty to write courses on a contract basis, putting their work into a proven instructional design framework, and the resulting course package would then be administered through delivery specialists in the organization.

In contrast, the "Traditional Model" would favor a conventional faculty, drawn upon the lines of most other universities in Canada. An administrator describes this model:

> There's a premise on which Athabasca is based, and that is that it is a University. And unlike the Open Learning Institute or some other distance education institutions, you are hiring academics. We have a commitment, it seems to me, and I feel very strongly about it, to having an in-house resident academic in any discipline that we teach. When I first arrived, we didn't have an Economist and we had some bad experiences in the development of an Economics course, partly, I think, because we were at the mercy of external academics. We had no one internally really competent to know when to listen, or when not to, or to corroborate. And it seems to me, there should be somebody in-house who's responsible for the discipline. It doesn't have to be just one person. Obviously, it's better if we have more than one. We don't expect to have expertise in every single facet of every discipline. But there must be someone who can oversee. Now, you can ask, "Why?". That can certainly be challenged. Obviously, part of it is credibility and if we want people to value an Athabasca University credit, then we have to be seen to be a university.
>
> If you only rely on externals, I question your ability to plan programming without the sense of the discipline. There's the notion of an academic community, an academic climate and what people can produce who have the love of the discipline. (11.1.1.1-1.1.2)
>
> Obviously, we want people who are well versed in their discipline. You want people who are aware of research. Why research? Well, in research, it seems to me, you want people alive in their field, open to new ideas, flexible and all those sorts of things that I believe come with the kind of inquiring mind and attitude towards learning that a good researcher brings. (11.1.1.11)

The Traditional Model establishes a community of in-house scholars. The presence of these academics send messages of credibility, internally and externally, which are enhanced by the research activities of the incumbents. ID Model proponents do not necessarily agree that Athabasca University's credibility to either students or outsiders is dependent upon the quality of an in-house faculty. They would counter:

> The students obviously don't care because I don't think there's any correlation between the quality of our academic staff and the completion rate, for example.
>
> And it seems to me that places like the U. of A. and U. of C. and other institutions in the province, probably look at us as an interesting educational institution that meets a particular need. But I don't think they ever sit around and worry about how much academic research we're doing or that kinds of stuff. (8.1.3.3)

These ideological wars were raged in earnest during the late 70's and early 80's. As one academic recollects:

> [When I came] it wasn't yet quite the end of the wars between the IDs and course developers; and the IDs and editors. They were separate units then. I was appalled by the ignorance -- the pretentiousness of it all -- the way people tend to develop excellent rationalizations of what they do and what they don't do. (1.1.2.1)

Acrimonious behavior appeared to characterize ideological differences. Illustrative of the academic members' belligerency toward the IDs is the internally famous "Popsicle" memo written in a 1980 memo in which the author takes umbrage at course production processes administered by the IDs. He states:

> Question: How many AU staff members would it take to operate a popsicle stand?
>
> Answer: Nine. One to operate the stand and eight to manage the process.

The memo goes on:

> Quite simply, I am unwilling to have parasites, under the guise of fancy management titles, interfere in the course development process. In the past, the parasites have done little but collect their fancy pay cheques...

Although the quoted memo was likely an extreme viewpoint, academics were beginning to actively resist the ID notion of course development, replacing it with a model reflecting their own perceptions of capabilities in developing strong, credible, acceptable distance education courses. In addition, academics began to agitate for the hiring of more of their members and fewer IDs. A key informant comments:

> What's happened, from my point of view, is that the academics have gradually fought a major offensive, over time, to solidify their positions and have anchored it in Terms and Conditions. And they have done an interesting thing politically in that they've tried to argue the crucial need of "forever academics" and for "more academics"... The real reason is that they're still afraid of being worked out of a job, and have worked to make this place, in a lot of ways, more traditional. One of the ways, I think, is reflected in this decision I talked about before of dropping the ID that was going to be hired and hiring another academic in its place. There was a way of finally winning out against the great threat to their security. (6.3.1.8)

As the concepts of a traditionally described academia gained ascendancy, the ID Model of the university waned. Partially, at least, this was due to hiring practices which tended to involve academics of a more traditionalist bent. A report:

> When you hire new academics, they've come from a traditional environment. They bring that in. [Hiring groups] tend to hire colleagues when if they get a chance to hire. Hiring has been very decentralized so that means that people tend to replicate themselves. And so, at the same time IDs are bringing in another person with a very strong view towards a non-traditional institution, the History group and the Psychology group and the Administrative Studies group are hiring three more traditional people. And so they're coming in, at the same time. People [hiring committees] start looking for people who will perpetuate themselves. Then you have a tremendous conservative force of people who are concerned about credibility. (11.1.2.1)

A preponderance of more traditionally-oriented faculty, with ideological ties to established organizational members, were hired during the halcyon days of growth experienced in the early 80s. The influence of these newcomers contributed to the decline of the ID model as representative of the organizational culture.

As academics were solidifying their position within the Traditional Model, IDs began to play a less central role in the university. The ID unit was disbanded and its members disbursed among the faculties to provide instructional design support for course developers. Of this period, an ID reflects:

> I think being in [a Faculty], working on what I considered to be contrived course team, was difficult. It was pretty much an underutilization of my expertise and a less than stimulating experience here. (8.1.3.2)

As a key informant mentioned about this period:

> "IDs, in their bitterness, just turned in on themselves. Their bitterness came through all the time". (1.1.2.9)

More recently, most of the ID unit has been reunited in the Centre for Distance Education where they are charged to provide their expertise to both internal and external clients while continuing to do research in distance education. Advantages to this reorganization into a specialized unit are mentioned by an ID:

> Things I do at the Centre are directly and immediately relevant to the primary role or the primary function of the university, and that is providing the student with an effective learning experience. (7.1.1.3)

From the above comment it would appear that IDs feel that they are once again prime contributors to the organization's goals, and have reached some accommodation with their re-conceived roles within the institution.

Fallout from these ideological wars, however, continue to drift through the halls of Athabasca University. For example:

> AU is just schizophrenic in that it wants to be a standard university. I even hear now that they want

> students around face-to-face. So it's a regression to me. It's a regression back toward the average. You know there is a difference. All the faculty now have to be researchers and have to publish. That definitely doesn't go hand-in-hand with forging ahead in distance education. I mean, I'm looking at it from a societal viewpoint. I think Athabasca does have a future if it's something unique. If it's just another, well, University of Lethbridge, to hell with it! I mean it's not needed. (5.2.1.6)

This academic plainly takes the attitude that Athabasca University is and should be "different". Energies, in his view, would be better expended in enhancing the unique aspects of the organization with less emphasis on encouraging congruencies with other institutions, a view that could find an ideological home in the ID model.

Another lasting memento of the ID model is the concern expressed by most of the informants regarding the quality of the product. One commented:

> We take almost no credit, either internally or externally for the excellent work we do on our courses. I have students, and I'm sure all coordinators have students, who say "I'm at the U. of A. or the U. of C. I've had my fill of disinterested professors. Do you have any more courses in that area?". You know, we ought to be enormously proud of that. We ought to be walking around six feet off the ground because we probably teach better than most major universities. We don't. We don't have any excitement for excellence around here. We don't even recognize excellence.
>
> What do I think is an excellent course? I think an excellent course is a course which clearly indicates to the student what is expected of them, clearly lays out what it wants to accomplish and then sets up a system of evaluation which reflects whether the student has achieved those goals, without any little hidden surprises or "guess what I'm thinking of". I

> think an excellent course motivates a student to want to learn. And an excellent course demonstrates that students learn with proof that they learn.
>
> I learned to write a course from IDs. I found working with IDs one of the most challenging experiences I've had here. (6.1.4.2-3)

Remnants of the ID model can be seen in this account. Courses are "excellent" teaching devices with clear objectives, with assessment systems which test only the defined objectives, with the materials designed to be motivating, and with students receiving feedback which indicates that they are learning. The IDs are seen as the people who guide this process through their adherence to learning theory and the principles of course design. There is another view which holds that IDs are not required in the course production process. One proponent:

> Developing a course is not that much fun in the end. You do it once or twice, then it's a recipe.
>
> You learn by doing it. I could argue, by the time you've done two courses, you shouldn't need an ID on the course. If you do, then it's because of your failings or because you want a crutch. And that seems to tend to happen here. We provide crutches all the time for people. The whole old notion of the course team, the course development and the ID, Editor, Visual Designer -- nobody was ever responsible for it. There was always somebody else who could share the responsibility and help you out. It made for a very laborious system I think.
>
> Quality control, I think, is another one of those kind of "red herrings". The biggest quality control we have is the fact that we're a distance education university, that we print our own material. That does more to ensure quality control than anything else we could do. If there's anybody who develops a course, who's name is on there, knows that it's out there and people, colleagues, can look at it and examine it, and praise it, that is a real

> boost to quality control. (10.1.1.11-14)

Here the responsibility for excellence, quality and accountability lies with the academic specialist. Courses can be turned out and delivered without an excessive expenditure of effort once the formulae are internalized. Distance education expertise is not restricted to one person or group of persons within the institution, and maintaining the myth that group production by a team of specialists produces better courses, leads to inefficiently used resources and diffusion of control.

Academics interviewed for this study were less sure that they wanted the burden of course development to rest on their shoulders. As one said:

> We need the IDs. I've written two courses now, but I wouldn't want to do another one without an ID. There should be encouragement for doing new and more productive course work. Otherwise we have no credibility. I think we have done a lot of good work here despite the system, but without incentive to do more, I have fears for the system. (6.2.1.5)

The notions of excellence and credibility are themes that run through this account. Inferred is the implication that the IDs and their expertise in course development are necessary components of reaching these goals. This academic suggests that his competence alone is not sufficient insurance that a quality product will result. An academic adds this viewpoint:

> They [the IDs] are supposed to have been the people who were the learning technologists and the learning psychologists and now they are gone. My own view is that if you get a good instructional developer, that your course is so much better than it would have been if you had just written it yourself. (3.2.3.1)

There is an element of despair in this account as the academic reflects of facing a future without ID support. Another academic concurs:

> The IDs have been hurting and angry for so darn long now, the unit is shot all to hell. Anyone interested in the systematic updating of the state of the art in instructional design was lost. That's the group that should have been able to tell the University, and probably could have if the University had been really wanting to listen. And that's most of the academics. Hey, these guys are experts on learning. We're not -- we're actually laymen on learning. (1.2.1.8)

Part of the reason that some academics are not willing to listen, this academic goes on to say, is due to the self-concept they have developed during their years in more traditional institutions:

> Academics don't have that kind of self-consciousness. There's no evidence in the four years I've been here that [some people, including administrators] are educationalists, unless you have some you want to show me. There's a whole science established by theory and then by practice, which includes learning. I'm just learning about learning. Academics are so damned cerebral -- they're out of balance. Their training makes them that way. Because they're trained to be specialists, they reduce everything to their specialization. A bunch of reductionists! (1.2.2.1)

To some extent, the argument offered by this academic suggests a clash of egos. However, underlying the strongly-held viewpoints, divergent ideologies are lurking; one which regards distance education as a collection of experts offering the best possible learning environment, and the other which envisions academic autonomy to be a strongly held and inviolable principle. This position describing the academic role was captured well in an anonymous speech given at a convocation at another university:

> The real leaders in a university, and this has always been so, are its superlative teachers and superbly accomplished scholars. Genuine deference, in a university, has always been paid, as it ought, to these people, not to the managers, not to the presidents and vice-presidents and deans and chairmen. University people, administrators included, understand this because they, not the administrators, are the fabric of a university. They give it its reason for being. It is they who define the community of scholars and apprentices that, since universities began, make institutions such as this different in kind from anything else society supports.
>
> Our professors serve the subjects and international disciplines that brought them into the university community in the first place, and they serve the students who want to share in their learning experience. This service, which is of a very high order and has been so for centuries, has it's own imperatives, embodying in fact, the first law of academe: teaching and research in higher education have their own rules and make their own demands by their very nature. Ultimately, no administrator can change them. It is the very nature of the beast to starve before it will be broken or taught to perform tricks on demand.

Time honored and tested, the role of the academic is to serve the discipline and to share their experiences with students without interference or interruption by administrators. As has been suggested in this section, a large part of the ID role is to administer, direct and contribute to academic work in course preparation and delivery as they envision in their model. The ID role then, clashes significantly with long-held "rules" of academia which envision the academic as final arbitrator of their functions as teachers and scholars.

It has been suggested that the "fall in grace" which the IDs have undergone has reduced the ability of the University to respond to the challenges of distance education as an innovative institution. The inference is that, at least in some ways, the lack of ID input strikes at the heart of institutional being. An academic discusses this point:

> I don't think Athabasca University is tending to it's knitting. I don't think it's tending to its raison d'etre. I think that I'm disillusioned so much in the sense that the role of instructional design has almost withered away within the institution. The review of instructional material, revisions of courses, the evaluation of courses, is almost non-existent. It is much more important, in the view of the University, in my perception, it's more important that faculty members here tend to get their disciplinary research done than it is to really get on with good courses and good effective delivery. (5.1.1.5)

Thus, the argument comes full circle -- institutional innovation and excellence versus more traditional academic functioning. The institution drifts along the continua; now concentrating on the quality of service to students, then focusing on building a "credible" faculty, attempting to determine whether the institution is oriented to innovative teaching or to developing a community of scholars. The model clash creates institutional cultural ambiguities which neither the organization nor individuals within it have been able to reconcile to this point.

Summary

Two of the contrasting ideologies that create cultural dissonance at Athabasca University have been known as the "ID Model" and the "Traditional Model". The ID Model envisions an institution focused on student learning facilitated by internal specialists in learning psychology, methods and practices, teamed with noted subject matter specialists who would contribute their expertise on a contractual basis. The Traditional Model emphasizes the role of the academic professional within a university setting, building on the traditions of research and the creation of a community of scholars.

Although the Traditional Model was more widely espoused than the ID Model during the period of this study, the latter Model was significantly affecting newcomer responses to the institution. Academic members reported experiencing tension between their role as providers of student access to undergraduate studies within the parameters of a distance education structure, and the need to strengthen their disciplinary expertise in the eyes of both internal and external audiences. One core factor of the institutional drift between ideologies appears to have been the creations of some important assumptions about historic and continued job stability -- a situation likely to provoke further stresses within the faculty community.

That the schism in ideologies is an important divisive force within Athabasca is a theme which runs through the accounts herein. From the considerable shock academics feel in coming to the University, through their on-the-job learning, adjusting to cultural "rules", to their efforts to achieve satisfactory rewards, the conflict wages. "How ARE things done around here?", "What is my place within this institution?", "What value can I place on myself, as an academic and professional, and as a functioning human being?", are questions which continue to resonate through the pages. Perhaps the academic who termed Athabasca University as "schizophrenic" used an appropriate term to describe the institution in its present phase of development.

Of late, a new player has come on the scene which may resolve many of the apparent cultural conflicts which currently exist. That player is the budget. An academic explains:

> It's really difficult right now to say what Athabasca is all about because it would be fairly simple just to regurgitate the mission statement and talk about open access, distance education and all of that. My impression right now is that Athabasca is a bit of a mixture. The organization is trying to give all sorts of aid and help to people that are seen as disadvantaged one way or the other, either because they live in a rural area, or they didn't complete high school, or something like that. I still think that Athabasca is an institution that should still have time to do that sort of thing. I still don't see it as an institution that should have a prime mission to do that, but at the same time, I see it as an institution that is also trying to legitimize itself and really be Alberta's fourth university, with it's perspectives accepted and acknowledged in various ways. I think there's going to be a long, long clash between these two whatever -- concepts, ideas, thrusts. Some of the financial considerations are running counter to this mission statement, running counter to the open mandate. That is what is going to force us to make some fairly hard choices in terms of who we serve, what we're doing, and what's worthwhile spending our time on. (4.1.2.5)

As budgets are reduced in educational institutions across the country, "hard decisions" have to be made about the core functions of an institution. Athabasca University, for the first time in its history, is having to confront financial stringency with the implied consequences of "downsizing". Some difficulties surrounding this experience and the subsequent effects on academics will be discussed in the next section.

Budget

In a previous section (see Research, Pages 347-373) it was suggested that the adoption of a set of academic criteria gleaned from more traditional universities have imposed a direction on Athabasca University that the institution is still attempting to reconcile with its mandate and particular requirements. In this section, the role of the budget as an arbitrator of academic activity and institutional processes will be discussed.

Budgets are powerful communications to organizational members. The budgetary control process, according to Handy (1985:349), is expected to a) form the basis of a plan, b) act as operational data, c) be a basis for control and analysis of performance, and, d) act as a stimulant for change. Messages of performance and change are sent to individuals via the budget, while control of these activities is exercised by others. The budget, then, tends to become an external prescription that guides behavior but does not generally provoke high internalized commitment, particularly during times of budget restraints.

Government funds to finance universities have become less abundant in recent years. An academic informant reflects:

> Other universities have been facing serious budget cuts for at least the last ten years. Typically it probably hasn't affected the average faculty member

> as much, simply because they haven't been as involved in the planning of the direction of the institution as we are here, because we're all involved in that to a much greater extent. For example, I use the U. of A. library quite regularly and I don't know what's happened in the last three or four years, but they obviously haven't been able to keep up in area after area. (2.1.2.1)

Athabasca University evaded many cuts which affected sister institutions, first because of its need for start-up money, and later, to assist with relocation. One result of the relatively generous funding levels was highlighted by the same academic who continues:

> The library down here [at AU] was given a grant which will enable them to have an exceptionally good collection for the years '84 to '87 and not a heck of a lot before and not a heck of a lot after. But for those years, in a number of areas, their collection is really better than the U. of A.'s -- a pretty bizarre situation. (2.1.2.1)

A special library grant allowed for extensive one-time purchases to support course production was made during the relocation phase. However, some areas, notably Legal Studies, have virtually no internal library support. A newly-appointed Law professor stated:

> What I want to know is what happened to all the money. When I was interviewed I was told there was lots of money for a library. I told them, "if you are going to do research in law, you need a good library." They said, "don't worry. Whatever you want we will get". (13.1.8.87)

When the faculty member cited above voiced this complaint at a meeting, he was answered "You just took too long to get here". Hired with an extensive publication record at the full professorial level, this academic required a little longer than a year to complete his academic commitments in another country. By the time he arrived at Athabasca University, the special library fund allocations had dried up so that building a collection in his disciplinary field was considerably more difficult.

Since 1985, Athabasca University has experienced a real decrease in cash flow for the first time in its history. The impact on the institution has been considerable as was pointed out by a key informant:

> Things are coming to a bit of a crux now because Athabasca's intention was always to provide access, to be an open university. People who hadn't had access in the past for one reason or another, would have another chance or a first chance at getting access to a university. This year we're going to run into budget problems. Enrolment has been too high. It's a question the provincial government is going to have to deal with, ultimately, a decision as to whether this experiment in open education will continue. Or else the university will be forced to do something to curtail enrolments. (2.1.1.8)

Academic staff hired before 1985 (including the group of key informants) have been rather abruptly faced with new economic realities as surpluses disappeared. As successive budgets are struck, new priorities and processes must be established and hard decisions reached. An academic comments:

> I really see [AU] as an institution that's going through a fair transition. It may have thought it

> made its transition by moving here, but now its got another one to go through, which is to come to grips with the fact that there will never be a real surplus again. That all you're really dealing with is adjusting the way you operate or maybe finding extra funding or cost efficiencies or something that will allow you to service more students a little more efficiently. But the days of free-rolling surplus are over! And I think there's going to be a lot of problems in just adjusting to that. It's going to take a lot of people a long time to accept that. I think it's just undeniable. (4.1.2.5)

Both of the academics quoted above cite another transition occuring at Athabasca University. Budget driven changes may significantly alter "the way things are done around here", perhaps calling both academic roles and continued tenure into question. Budget restriction, coming as rapidly as it has on the heels of relocation, has created new and significant adjustment tensions. Several budget related problems have arisen, the respondent notes, which appear to strike at the core of distance education as described by Athabasca University. One such problem relates to tutors as described by a key informant:

> We have a problem now. In order to get money [to fund new projects], one of the recent battles that went on here involved squeezing tutors and taking money out of that area and putting up a fund for distance ed research. Now, we have a very disgruntled group of tutors out there. That certainly has been a problem. They have been an extraordinarily dedicated group. So the business of what we're doing now, which is increasing tutor blocks and cutting the number of tutors (the number of tutor contracts we have), I don't think is a good idea. I think that could cause us some problems down the line in terms of quality of product. (2.1.2.6)

Budget cuts appear to be adversely affecting tutor contracts with a corresponding drop in tutor motivation and commitment. This is reported to be an important concern, not only because of the human damage, but also, at least potentially, because of a reduction to the level and quality of service to students. In addition, the professorial staff relies, to a considerable extent, on the professionalism and self-motivation of the tutorial members as the 'front line' of course delivery -- solving problems, translating learning materials and motivating students. Highly qualified, the tutors nevertheless work at a distance and in relative isolation. Tutor's continuing good will, as exhibited through their motivation and dedication, is considered central to effective course delivery. A key informant comments:

> Academic's specific responsibilities are different at AU because an AU academic has tutors under them, for example. Through the tutors you exercise your responsibilities to convey to your students a significant aspect of the discipline in which you work. I had a very serious conversation with one of my tutors who said that his dedication had decreased. And that is because he used to know who he was working for and was very dedicated to the ideals of the institution. He now says that he doesn't know any more -- he doesn't know what he's dedicated to. And I think that if there are very many tutors out there with that reaction to what's going on here, we're really -- we're REALLY -- in much more trouble than we realize. Because we're so dependent on our tutors. We need to bring back the tutor confidence. It doesn't matter what good will I have established to work with them with, it's not going to do them much good. They need to be better recognized by the organization. They are still thought of as doing part-time work, on the side -- a lot of females... (3.2.3.6)

At a deeper level, the very role and relationship of tutors with Athabasca University, as well as the manner of servicing student needs, will likely undergo renewed debate in light of continuing budget cuts.

To what level courses can be developed in the future under budget constraints is also uncertain. An academic discusses this concern:

> I've worked at a lot of universities. I'm actually quite cynical about how universities are run. I just think that the University makes dreadful decisions really. Decisions to do things that alter our programs, yet are encouraged. Without a fully fledged academic program, I just think we are a joke. There's no excuse for it. By fully fledged, I mean at a point at which we can offer a reasonable range of programs and courses to undergraduate students. I think that we don't. Under this new regime, the last course I wrote that was supposed to open may well never open. First of all, over my protest, only 25 books have been ordered and they're all being used by a seminar at the Edmonton Institution. More books have been ordered, but, of course, will take two or three months to get here. By the time they get here I won't have any more tutors because, as you know, the tutor blocks are full. In light of this situation, I don't think I'll ever write another course. I don't see the point of it. (3.1.1.10 and 1.1.4)

Cuts in the tutor budget not only impact on current course delivery processes but also have serious implications for new courses. The ability of academics to write and to deliver courses in the future could be restricted by budgetary processes, possibly even leading to a situation in which some academic positions could be considered redundant. The 1986-87 budget explicitly stated that one of its goals was to maintain existing positions. However, no such promises can be made for the future should fewer funds be available in years to come. In informal conversations academics note that Terms and Conditions do not have seniority clauses, and there is some speculation as to which faculty members might be released should the funding continue to shrink. An expected result is that some academics feel they have reason to fear for their job security.

Another budget related concern cited by the key informants was the manner in which the University might be able to serve its student body in the future. One observed:

> The demand for higher education is coming from a much broader group with more diverse backgrounds that can't get to a typical university on a regular basis. They're also much more keen and they have to be because it's pretty difficult to do a degree by distance education. You don't have the group's support, you don't have the going to classes regularly. You have a package in front of you and a phone number to call. It's entirely up to you. Two years ago I was like most other people in that I had never heard of a distance education university. Now, having been involved, of course, I realize that it's an exceptionally big business and has been for a long time in many parts of the world. Typically the problem has been that many countries over-invested in higher education which served mostly the sons and daughters of the well-to-do who lived in the city. If you lived in the country or small towns you just didn't have access. Evidence of demand has been there in this province. Distance education has really taken off. They've had to close offices and shut down telephones because they don't have the people in order to process the paper work fast enough to meet demand. (2.1.2.4)

Open access has been a criteria underlying Athabasca University functioning. With budget cuts, the worst-case scenario is that the University will not be able to continue its policy of openness, at least as that policy has been articulated to date. The more positive-case is that enrolments will be limited in some way, suggesting a determination of criteria for deciding who would be allowed in and who would be screened out. Even the less drastic position would seem to significantly alter the mandate. Musing upon the possible outcomes, a key informant says:

> There will probably be a compromise that's not satisfactory to all in terms of dealing with people who are seriously disadvantaged. In fact, we find it now (I'm thinking of the Native Access Program). One of the clear things that happens as the proposal keeps circulating and going through its stages, is that the point is continuously made that this is contingent on other funding. The length between the financial problems -- not really problems, but the financial restraints -- of the University and open access, can be clearly seen. We'd like to do these things, but we've got to get the money from elsewhere. What happens is anybody's guess. But my guess is that in a case like that, some of the really disadvantaged groups would be dropped. We just wouldn't be able to service them. Or, that we would come to a real crisis in which we decide whether we'll service the really disadvantaged people, which is not cost-efficient or cost-effective, at the expense of all sorts of people who can rush through our system fairly effectively and give us revenue, not cost us too much pain and all of that. Now, how that would resolve itself, I don't know. Personally speaking, I'm more interested in being part of an institution that does things like providing a good Native Access Program, than an institution that provides just a slightly more convenient way for someone who's got lots of options. (4.1.2.7)

The above quote, like others in this chapter, indicate that many of the newer academics have incorporated Athabasca University's mission and mandate into their thinking and attitudinal responses to a fairly high degree. For this reason, they are able to express alarm concerning the seeming reductions in the University's ability to maintain and to forward its avowed goals.

The worst-case scenario of organizational dissolution lurks as a hidden agenda beneath the facade of many discussions. Organizational members have a history of being unsure of Athabasca University's place within the pantheon of post-secondary institution. For example, in 1979, an executive officer called for a change in attitude when he wrote:

> Our image is not helped by our obsequious attitudes towards the other universities. It is part of received truth -- and probably true -- that AU could not have got started without the benign indifference of the University of Alberta. However the apologetic, self-deprecating "new boy on the block" manner in which we habitually present Athabasca University may have the insidious effect of undermining our confidence in ourselves.

The "hat in hand" debate has long raged. More recently, unpublished Centre for Distance Education research has indicated that only about 5% of current students can be termed program students. Other students use Athabasca University to take courses toward credentials at other institutions, or, as in the case of the majority, do not return to take more courses. The questions then remain; "What role does Athabasca University play in providing a significant service to students?" What is the credibility of Athabasca University as Alberta's fourth university?" "Can the University's continued existence, at least as presently described, be justified?" And inherent in these questions is the personal one, "What about me?" An administrator sums up:

> I think people could cope with the move from Edmonton to Athabasca when they felt the University was growing. O.K., you have pains and tensions, the growth was there. You knew that if you had a good idea and were persistent, you could get the money for it, you could do something. That's gone! We're looking at significant "down-sizing". I mean, Hell, if we're facing a minus 10 [budget] -- whoof -- it's time to go! Its another big transition.
>
> So it's not simply that the University has moved and grown, the University has moved and changed. New management, new location, new issues to face, new directions, new opportunities -- some of which are challenging, some of which are exciting, some of which are threatening. The whole institution, in moving, changed. And the environment in which the institution has been perceived, has changed. So there's a lot of stuff hitting the place at the same time. I mean, if you're a support member of staff, who made the sacrifices of coming up, and you hear minus five, minus 10, and you know damned well what that means in most of these kinds of organizations -- support staff are the first to go. You ask yourself, "Why am I here?". Given the freeze on appointments and the fact that quite a large number of staff are red lined in terms of salary, that people can already see managers saying "No" to activity -- why have another set of hassles?
>
> I think there is an accumulative effect. I think one of the things that drives right through that if you take all of these things, and a slice of people's lives, in each of these slices -- the job, the move, the nature of the University itself -- goes right through those slices. I'm talking about the University's emotional impact on people. I'm

> talking about feelings of stability, security, warmth and caring. I think that if you feel in transition, any nuance of change or uncertainty becomes more threatening. (9.1.2.5-6)

Summary

Budgets send powerful communications to an organizational membership concerning organization cultural values pertaining to priorities and practices. Individual members, or even departments, can usually influence the process only in relatively minor ways through such processes as budget submissions and participation on budgetary committees. The budget, as finally set, will describe parameters in which subsequent organizational functioning will occur for the perceived good of the total organization.

During its early years, Athabasca University was in a growth position. Enrolements were not only increasing rapidly, but new staff was being added to meet the need. Relocation afforded additional funding even as sister institutions were beginning to feel the effects of an economic downturn. When budget cuts became a reality for Athabasca University, several important questions surrounding "Who we are" and "How we do things around here" became important considerations. In particular, budget cuts appear to be affecting such central considerations as openness, student accessibility and the relationships of part-time and full-time academic staff. Key informants, hired during a period of relative prosperity, report increased tension surrounding not only their role, but their continued presence at Athabasca University, as the institution continues to "downsize" in response to funding restrictions.

Perhaps new economic realities interpreted through the budget process have encouraged new levels of organizational and personal uncertainty. Several informants have pointed to the significant transition Athabasca University is experiencing which brings some important notions of organizational culture question. In addition, many appear frustrated, confused, and to some extent, despondent over the future of the University and their places within it. Not only have newcomers had to adjust to new roles and to new definitions of themselves as professionals, they have also had to attempt to define and redefine their expectations of the institution, and in these altered circumstances, the organization's changing expectations of them.

Views on Socialization

Newcomers to Athabasca University have expectations about their new work situations which are largely drawn from previous experiences in other universities. They assume, to some extent, that the job to be done will not require significant new skills or abilities such as might be the case if they were to attempt other work situations, for example, as plumbers or travel agents. The academics included in this study have had extensive training in their disciplines and in the professorial career they have chosen. With some justification, they anticipate a set of criteria to exist in their new positions that would be common to most university situations, albeit with particular details and circumstances surrounding the achievement of those criteria somewhat situation specific.

Individuals enter Athabasca University with concepts of themselves as academics with at least some attributes of status and prestige. Most of the new faculty members in this study have PhDs, some obtained at prestigious institutions, as well as considerable professional experience. Socialization procedures for academic members into the new organization, to some extent, reflect recognized ability and seniority. In Van Maanen and Schein's terms (1979:235), they are introduced to the new organization through a process of "informal socialization" which:

> does not distinguish the newcomer's role specifically, nor is there an effort made in such programs to rigidly differentiate the recruit from other more experienced organizational members. As such, informal tactics provide a sort of laissez-socialization for recruits whereby new roles are learned, it is said, through "trial and error".

The "trial and error" method can have advantages for the newcomer. As one academic noted:

> Things can happen in a haphazard way. You do learn -- mostly on your own initiative. To an extent, that's all right. We should have a fair bit of initiative, having come as far as we have, and so on -- being able to work on our own with a fair bit of initiative. (3.1.2.6)

Strengths of the trial and error method included the opportunity to exercise initiative and professional discretion in selecting and accomplishing duties and responsibilities, according to this academic. However, more is needed, according to this academic, who continues:

> The word "process" to describe the way that an individual comes into this organization suggests that there is some sort of regularity about how that comes about. I don't think there is. I think it's completely haphazard and depends upon the person. I think that some people have done much better than others, maybe because they are more outgoing people who are good about walking into somebody's office and saying, "Hey, I don't have a clue about how to do X. Could you help me out?" Some people have trouble doing that and so they don't find things out for the longest time, or do everything themselves. I don't think there is a process. I think it's truly haphazard. (3.1.2.5-6)

Personal initiative is an important attribute of those who would succeed through the trial and error method. Recruits must select their own socialization agents with the attendant risks of that agent a) has the requisite relevant knowledge, and b) is able to effectively transmit that knowledge. Another problem for academics at Athabasca University involves asking others, who have their own pressures, to take time and energy from other duties to teach them. Not only are academics shy about doing that, they are also aware of exposing their own real or perceived inadequacies. An academic comments on this difficulty:

> I hear the stories of other guys slugging it out. Learning the hard way. Of course, there's a certain amount of pride. People -- especially academics -- don't want to say they are failing, or making mistakes. It's sort of a pride there. There is a training factor there. And maybe colleagues don't know how to ask for help. Maybe it's a two-way street. (1.1.2.7)

There are, it seems, two prices to be paid by new academics for seeking instructive help from colleagues. One price is the psychological (perhaps even material) debt which occurs through imposing upon others who are "already overworked". The other is at least a tacit admission of failure with attendant self-induced connotations of professional inability and insufficiency.

A related "down side" of the trial and error method that leaves newcomers largely to their own devices in "learning the ropes" is the need to be particularly skillful at self-motivation. As one key informant remarked:

> This place is a wonderful place to develop your abilities to be self-motivating. And to do it in a very negative environment. And this place is very negative. What I have found is that it takes an enormous personal energy for me to maintain that. I find it potentially very crippling. (6.1.5.2)

Others commented on the lack of encouragement for what they do as academics at Athabasca University. One stated:

> I do think that enough people are under enough stress around here and there is just not enough stroking -- praising of each other. That's typical of academics anyway, but I find it even more here. People seem to be under a lot more tension and we need to be supportive of each other. (3.1.2.6)

There appears to be a view within the University that mitigates against the "stroking" the academic cited here would like encouraged. An administrator offered his perceptions in this regard:

> I don't hold hands. I think people are hired to do a job, and sure there's a support system built into this place. But I don't believe that we should be going around patting anyone on the back or telling them, "Jees, you're doing a great job!" I think that one does that to a certain extent. But I think, as faculty members, we all tend to forget what a privileged role we have in society. You know, we're well paid, doing things that are interesting. How many other people can pick up a newspaper and say they're working or tell themselves they're working? Where does the line end between interests and work? It's almost non-existent for most academics. So, we're very fortunate people, very fortunate. And I think that once academics establish a course of action, it's up to them to be on with it. If they need help , I think it's up to them to ask for it. That's one of my weaknesses is that I don't give much positive reinforcement. Probably not as much as I should. That's just my personal inflection. (10.1.1.6)

This administrator tends to reject the idea that academics need external encouragement, as much of their feelings of self-worth come from the job itself and the favored position which they occupy. But, a "good word" can be a greater motivator than any other incentive, according to a key informant:

> I think all that most of these academics -- hard working academics -- ever need is a really intelligent "pat on the shoulder". They don't need a higher salary. They don't need any exceptional external or monetary reward -- just someone who comes along and says, "How are you doing?" You know, in an intelligent way. "Can I help you?" And you feel free to say, "Well, here's what I'm doing and I'm not getting any farther". "Here's what is happening and I'm quite excited". And "Hey, that's great! And here's where you can take it." You know, we haven't had that. I call it giving the person a "pat on the shoulder". (1.2.2.1)

Perhaps, as suggested by the previously quoted administrator, experienced organizational members have less need for a "pat on the shoulder" as they may have gained some confidence in their abilities to extend meaningful contributions to the organization. However, recruits, even though not differentiated substantially from more experienced members in the "informal socialization" tactic, may be expected to be more anxious of their acceptance and worth and consequently may well require some assurances that the path they are following is correct and valued. Moreover, in accordance with the views given by the academic cited above, there is a considerable body of literature which supports theories of the value of positive reinforcement. This work is encapsulated by Arnold and Feldman (1985:68) who state:

> Reinforcement theory argues that the behavior of people is largely determined by its consequences. In other words, those actions that tend to have positive or pleasant consequences tend to be repeated more often in the future, while those actions that tend to have negative or unpleasant consequences will be less likely to be repeated again.

Thus, trial and error methods, particularly in the absence of positive reinforcements, may negatively affect motivation and commitment, while failing to ensure that desirable behavior recurs over time.

Trial and error methods of socialization have other costs, one of the most important of which, from an organizational point of view, is the length of time required for learning to take place. An account:

> It takes a long time to learn what's going on around here, that's true. Always finding out something new. That's true. I think maybe there's two areas. One in terms of course writing. I suppose when I came here, all I really could do was take a look at a few existing courses and sort of make up my own mind without having much of an idea of how much work went into the different options, of the costs, of the different ways of how to write like how to pitch the writing. I think we can certainly improve this by organizing that a little better. Getting people involved in a bit more of a discussion or learning about how much work really should be in a three credit course, how much reading should be there, given that you don't want the student to be running into difficulties. You need to know what the student is going to do if he's going through something and comes to something he doesn't understand. Does he go off to "Channel B" and work through that. Or is he just going to be lost until

> he gets to his tutor? Which has a lot to do with instructional design.
>
> And the second thing has much more to do with just how the university runs and how it fits together. You know, there does seem to be such a division of labor, that I still don't know what Student Services do. How exactly does Student Services fit into the machine? (2.2.2.3)

After a minimum incumbency of two years, there are still pivotal learning which have not taken place, according to the academic quoted above. Several respondents agreed. For example:

> From my perspective, it's only now that I'm beginning to understand what this place is about. Not completely of course. I still can't put faces to names, even though this is a small institution. But I now have a pretty good idea of what people do and how it all contributes. I think that there is so much to understand that it takes a lot longer than six months -- more like two years. And then there is still a lot to know. (4.3.2.20)

The learning process is likely never really finished, particularly in this age of accelerated change where some conditions, environments and technologies alter almost before they can be mastered. But when essential elements of the job -- such as who people are, what they do, and how it all works together -- are still less than complete after two years or more of full time work, it can be assumed that some important integrative processes for new employees has been overlooked. It would seem to follow that for an appreciable period of time, the organization is getting less value from its people resources, and perhaps material resources, than it might have anticipated upon hiring new organizational members.

Finally, a Trial and Error method cost is the potential for a drain on self-esteem. Implications of this drain appeared in the above accounts as individuals reported their struggles to achieve or maintain self-worth within the existing structure.

Themes of stress and tension involved in learning pivotal organizational processes run through many of the accounts in this study. Apparently, one of the organizational messages understood by newcomers is that the talents and abilities they bring into the organization are, at least in some senses, not quite sufficient for the job at hand. Schein (1968:212) suggests that these messages are subtle, but identifiable, "upending" or "disconfirming" experiences. Such experiences are described by Schein to serve the function of

> detaching the person from his former values, of proving to him that his present self is worthless from the point of view of the organization and that he must redefine himself in terms of the new roles which he is to be granted.

Most of the academics at Athabasca University who contributed to this study experienced an upending incident which served to disconfirm their view of themselves as capable people with significant talents to offer an organization which, in turn would value their contributions. For example, two of the key informants did not receive tenure confirmation on their first evaluation for permanent appointment -- a rare occurrence at Athabasca University. One of these tells his story:

> Then I came up for tenure review and faced the worst personal attack that I've ever faced in any job anywhere, all of which was unfounded because I wrote a letter indicating that it was not true and indicated where anyone who was interested could check for the sources of information. I also indicated that my course production had been slowed up because I had a serious heart problem. My supervisor, in essence, called me a liar and said that because I had not taken off work, I obviously didn't have a problem. But I was concerned about course deadlines, so I had agreed to check in at the hospital about once a week, even though the doctor wanted to hospitalize me. I had gotten a negative yearly assessment which I didn't appeal because I thought "Well, hell. I'll be coming up for tenure review in a couple of months. The evidence is clear. Any decent committee will look at the evidence and see I'm being screwed." Which was a mistake in hindsight.
>
> When I came up for tenure review, my supervisor argued that since I hadn't appealed it, it was obviously true, without checking any of the evidence. I was cited for not having kept up a rapid enough course production rate even though the ID indicated that I was ahead of schedule. And that the work was excellent. He (the supervisor) also indicated that I hadn't kept in touch with my tutors. Calls to my tutors indicated that he hadn't even checked with them. I documented all of this, and it was all ignored.
>
> At the tenure review, I was flabbergasted to find out that the evidence was again discounted on the basis of the supervisor's argument and I was given a two year probation. (6.1.1.4)

Doubtless, another side to this case could be made by the supervisor. It is not, however, the purpose of this study to post-judge the merits of the situation, but to reflect the perceptions of academics as they adjusted to the faculty role at Athabasca University. According to the account above, this academic viewed himself as not only having given exceptional service, but to have done so under difficult personal circumstances. That his efforts were patently, to him, not appreciated or valued was a blow to his self-concept and self-esteem as a professional, as an expert and as a human being. In his view, he had been "upended" or disconfirmed.

The second academic spent his probationary period doing program planning. He and a senior staff member intensively investigated the scope, components and delivery methods of a concentration in their disciplinary area. As little other course work was done during this period, according to this academic, tenure was postponed. He reports:

> We completely misread management. And we paid through the nose for that. I talked [my colleague] into the view that "you've got to know where you're going if you're going to develop courses around here. Let's do some program evaluation". That produced the famous/infamous ground paper which led into considering alternative learning models. We poured over that and put six months into it. (1.1.1.8) We wanted to go back to learning models -- student's learning, as opposed to trial and error. We got hammered for that. [With that and the state of my personal life] I was burned out. I burned out on the job. I didn't take sick leave, and so my productivity and the quality of my work was poor. That almost led to me not getting tenure. (1.2.1.16)

Personal life experiences were not taken into account in the formal evaluations of the two academics cited here. As well, academic activities which seemed authentic, reasonable and valuable were apparently not so perceived by supervisory and peer personnel. Perhaps the use of the words "worst personal attack" and "hammered" are illustrative of the reactions of these academics to the described set of circumstances.

A second category of upending experiences occurs when faculty members are encouraged to undertake special projects which have little likelihood of reaching fruition. An example is provided by a key informant:

> We set up an [Interdisciplinary] Studies committee to look into the possibilities of offering these Study courses which could be offered through distance education. At the time, this was not being done at all anywhere in Canada. A group of 11 or 12 of us were all very committed to the idea. We had a summer student who was doing surveys and information sessions and gathering information. We got quite a lot of positive response from various groups around the province about how interested they would be in this. I was given money to go to a conference. We were at the point of setting up an advisory committee, at which point we were advised that the [Interdisciplinary] Studies had been cut completely from the five year plan. And that's the sort of thing that I mean. One invests a lot of time and energy above and beyond one's written -- you know, you get these little written things with the written duties on it. You know, completely beyond that. So on one hand, being praised for it, being given a summer student, being sent to a conference -- and then, nothing! I personally have a severe morale problem at the moment. (3.1.1.5)
>
> And where I became somewhat bitter was that one year I was alloted time and money for that, and the next year just cut flat. And that's always hurt me -- to be cut flat for the very thing that you were praised for, because that did take quite a lot of effort and it was recognized by everyone who was working on it. (3.2.1.8)

This key informant reports being personally hurt and suffering a morale lapse which is attributed, in part, to the incident cited above. The resources received, added to the praise garnered, led this faculty member to believe the activity engaged in was valuable to the University community. Moreover, this responsibility was taken on over and above job specifications which would seem, to this academic member, to be sending a message to the institution of strong commitment and enthusiasm for its stated goals. It could well be that the University had sound reasons for aborting the project before it got off the ground, but the incident left this academic with strong feelings of disillusionment.

Thirdly, a type of upending experiences is concerned with the perceived oblivion on the part of the organization to the scarce expertise that an individual brings to the job. For example:

> I had, at one time, perceived myself as being a senior [technical] person at AU. I thought of myself as having had, not only many years of industrial experience, but many years of academic experience. Yet, I found that [an] administrative officer of the University was incapable of listening to my advice. I was incapable of giving him any advice. I think he resented it. He was suspicious. He thought I was coming from some kind of territorial "agrande assez moi" which nothing could be further from the truth at all! Right? Nothing? So I think that his rejection of my considered advice, I hate to say it, but I think it was filthy. (5.1.2.1)

This disconfirming incident is also recounted with some bitterness. He mentions his feelings of being "incapable" and that his treatment was "filthy". Strong words indeed.

With these negative accounts, along with many others that have been recorded in this paper, the question arises "Why do these people stay?". Various reasons are given, for example:

> I have a commitment to stay at the university for another couple of years. I mean I don't have to keep on forever. Well, what is forever and ever when you're facing retirement at 65? It doesn't really matter that much. Yeah! I think there's enough going on here now. There's a fair amount of good things going on. (5.1.2.4)

> One of the things that makes it attractive is that you are eligible for sabbatical after three years, which is unusual. If I were to look at leaving now, it would mean giving that up. Whereas if I stay for another year ... (2.1.2.3)

> One of the things that would make me think in terms of staying on is that I am so committed to the University's mandate. I mean, I think it's wonderful. One of the best things they ever did as a group of faculty members was to push to have the mandate of the University stated the way it is. I'm very, very happy about the fact we specified innovations and so on to make the University available, not only available, but to make it possible for students to be successful in. I don't want to seem belittling of the importance of home study people, because most of the people that I'm tutoring would not be attending university otherwise. So it's really what we do that keeps me interested. (3.1.1.9)

> If things really tighten up around AU, we in this [faculty] have a much better chance to bail out and go do other things, where the people on the other side of the house could be in real trouble. Yeah, I think now that I'm approaching 40 and have dabbled here and dabbled there, and been in the academic world a bit, you lose a bit of credibility as far as being able to apply for a job in the open market. I need some time to build a record. (4.3.2.11)

> One of the reasons I haven't left here is that I had a lot to learn about learning and about teaching. I wanted to learn that. (6.1.4.3)
>
> I think there is a scenario still being played out and I don't think the final scene has happened yet. I've got hope for myself. This year is a year of integration in terms of the preceding four. (1.2.2.4)

The term of tenure, defined by retirement is one reason for staying with the university, as are some of the other benefits such as a relatively generous benefits program. The opportunity to learn new and useful skills and the academic goals of the institution are motivators for others. For at least one faculty member, there is some assurance of being able to get another job should the one at Athabasca University disappear or become untennable. Only the last cited academic appears to look toward the future with perspectives of personal growth and satisfaction.

On the other hand, all but one of the key informants indicated less than total commitment for the future. In the same order as presented above are accounts these academics gave during the course of the interviews:

> Well, last time I quit -- I wrote out my letter of resignation, signed it, and almost sent it -- was last August. (5.1.2.3)
>
> I'll stay for a period of time, I guess. I have not made a decision to stay here for ten years or forever. (2.1.2.3)
>
> The first year I was here I nearly quit my job every day. Every single day I almost quit my job. I've lived here for two years and I'm still up and down.

> I think I'll only stay here another year. (3.1.1.8)
>
> I wouldn't go so far as to pretend that it's an absolute commitment. I can also see that at any given point in the future (I've done this in the past), I could quite easily just say, "Enough of that! We're packing up, we're going!" (4.3.2.9)
>
> My need to be in this area, near my children, is within a couple of years of being through -- when they get out of high school. As near as I can see, there are no other reasons to be here. I find that as being extremely tragic because I have a tendency to give 200%, and have here, even though I've gotten it in the neck. (6.1.6.2)

A telling report which seemed to sum up an underlying malaise many of the key informants expressed is contained in this account:

> One of the things that is a real barometer as far as I'm concerned is whether I'm having fun or not. And when six months goes by, and one has this sort of grim attitude toward everything, then something is definitely wrong. And then one thinks, "Is this a product of my child being young?" and of course people are tied down when children are younger. But my main barometer is whether I'm having fun or not. And if not, some sort of change is in order. The barometer has definitely been reading low in the last few months. Not enough fun. (3.1.2.4)

Mobility was part of the career pattern for academics before the budget crunch of the last decade or more (Wilson, 1942; Caplow and McGee, 1961; Finkelstein, 1984). Mobility of academic people is no longer as possible as it once was (Neatby, 1985). Previously, as academics matured in their professional life, they moved into better paying or more prestigious positions with other universities. It is therefore somewhat thought provoking that so many of the academics interviewed for this study were looking beyond Athabasca University even during times of economic stringency and a dearth of tenure track appointments in many disciplines.

The general attitudes which indicate tenuous long term commitments to the institution must be somewhat concerning to executive officers who, in their capacity of administrators have had to absorb the costs associated with any new appointments (Wanous, 1980). Although replacing incumbents may offer the institution an opportunity to recruit highly motivated and talented people, a substantial investment in the growth and development of existing staff will not have been lost.

Summary

If culture can be loosely defined as "the way we do things around here" then it becomes apparent that ambiguities exist at Athabasca University which need to be sorted through by the newcomer attempting to adapt to new environments.

Upon entering a new organization, people take on a new way of life. Referent points which served well as guidelines in previous situations either no longer work or take on altered meanings. Even the language used within the new culture is different, and the idiom must be mastered if one is to become an insider. There are acronyms and shorthand to be learned as well as institutionally-generated terms, specific to the setting and more familiar words which have different connotations and meanings within the organizational setting. As these learnings are clear cut and the recruit is immersed in the new language on a day-to-day basis, mastery of the language presents few difficulties, although particular connotations have to be learned over time while others are in an emerging status of negotiation as the institution strives to achieve organization-wide consensus.

New maps of time and space must also be constructed as newcomers adapt to the culture of the new organization. At Athabasca University, academics coming from more traditional backgrounds experience some difficulty in adjusting to the year round format and office-based organization of this specific distance education environment.

As a result of the relocation of Athabasca University to the town of Athabasca, a new building was erected to house the University in its first permanent home. The building is remote from the town, distant from its student body and tutors, removed from the cultural, educational, medical and other facilities generally available in a larger center, and separate from its larger environment of post-secondary education and regulatory and client groups. In addition, the faculty members are physically, psychologically and disciplinarily separate from each other and from their larger, cosmopolitan communities.

Prior to, and during the course of the move to Athabasca, the University made some public statements enunciating espoused values concerning the value of people to the institution and expressing care and concern for their families. Organizational action appeared to be at variance with these stated cultural values which has resulted in distress and inordinate strain on those affected. Individual members continue to adjust their personal and professional circumstances in an effort to adapt to the spatially-driven cultural orientations of the organization.

There also appears to be a cultural conflict between the stated requirements for research, embodied in Terms and Conditions, and the actual format of the job to be done. As a new institution, embodying a new (for Canada) concept of education, the most pressing thrust is to become established as a viable contributor to providing university-level courses and degrees to students who are unable or unwilling to access existing institutions. Therefore, the organizational need has been for the fastest production of courses possible under given constraints, and the need to service a disparate and distance student body as efficiently and effectively as possible. In seeming opposition to these organizational goals are the requirements for academics to engage in research activities in order to qualify for institutional rewards. Moreover, there is some division among organizational members as to the desired direction of research projects either focusing on institution-related research or disciplinary research. These cultural conflicts further confuse recruits as they attempt to adapt to organizational and professional expectations.

Organizations are capable of developing ideologies based on core assumptions. When two competing ideologies vie for organizational supremacy, significant cultural conflicts can occur. Such is the case at Athabasca University. One ideology holds that the University, as an innovative institution will focus on learning and adult education principles. Recognizing that group lectures are not the only, or even the best, way to learn, the University will offer students learning packages which embody the best available expertise and technology. Courses will be written by specially contracted first-rate academics in the field, and their material will be put into proven learning formats by educational specialists at Athabasca University. Course delivery will be accomplished by experts who are non-academics.

Opposed to this ideology is the view that Athabasca

University is Alberta's fourth university and must strive to become an acceptable member of the provincial sisterhood. This involves hiring an academic staff representing expertise in, and responsible for each area that the University offers courses in, exercising more stringent control over students and designing programs which are compatible to or replaceable with offerings at other institutions. Echoes of these ideological differences reverberate through decision-making groups and institutional strategies. As the institution drifts between these paradigms, the new academic attempts to access the best possible assistance in planning and developing their courses while doing so in an atmosphere that does not appear to actively value those efforts.

Budgets also send strong cultural messages to organizational members. As budgetary restraints, which have relatively recently become a factor at Athabasca University, continue to escalate, new questions arise as to the mandate of the university and to the position of members within it. These cultural strains are also taking their toll of the adaptative efforts of new academics.

With both the institution and the academics within them undergoing extensive change in a turbulent environment, the reactions of academics to the situation can be expected to be ambivalent. Also, in some important ways, academics at

Athabasca University are exposed to disconfirming evidence of their personal value to the organization, which further affects motivation and commitment. As a result, academics waver between aspects of the job which keep them employed at the university and general reluctance to consider a long-term future with the organization.

Chapter 8:

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to explore the transition experiences of academics as they adapted to the role of faculty members in a distance education university. The concepts of transition and organizational socialization formed the conceptual framework for this study. In this context, the definition of transitions offered by Hopson and Adams (1976:5) was used, which states, "a transition is a discontinuity in a person's life space", the requirements for which are (i) a personal awareness of the discontinuity and (ii) new behavioral responses to situations. The definition for organizational socialization was drawn from Van Maanen (1977b:15) who described the process as "the manner in which individuals become members and continue as members of the organization -- both from the standpoint of the individual and from the standpoint of others in the organization".

Given that the purpose of this study was to investigate transition experiences from the perspective of those who had recently undergone the process, a series of interviews, conducted according to the established guidelines of qualitative research methods, were held with six academic members of Athabasca University, a distance education institution. This group comprised the majority of those who had achieved tenured status in the previous two to four years or the time span of the typical probationary period for new faculty members at th University. This group formed the "key informants" of the study. As the study progressed and there appeared to be a need for further information, and/or clarification, other faculty and administrators were interviewed. There were seven respondents in this latter group, totaling thirteen direct organizational informants who contributed data to this study. In addition, a variety of private and institutional records were examined.

Both the confidentiality requirements of the study and the nature of the time frame surrounding data collection required three important commitments from the viewpoint of the researcher. One commitment was that the information was analyzed from a symbolic interaction perspective which assumes that objects, people, situations and events do not possess meaning, but that meaning is conferred on them. People actively engage in creating and interpreting their world in a purposeful way and these interpretations are shared with others in an effort to achieve consensus or "shared meanings". Action occurs as a result of symbolic interpretation of stimuli rather than as a result of the stimuli themselves.

Closely allied to the symbolic interaction perspective is the second commitment to reflexivity or to the notion that "if men define things as real, they are real in their consequences" (Handel, 1982:36). Following this guideline, there was little attempt in compiling or analyzing data to determine the "truth" of a situation or circumstance. Rather, the accounts of individuals were deemed to relate to the interviewee's relationship with themselves which provided a basis for their actions.

Thirdly, a commitment was made to the indexicality of the accounts. Thus the information is viewed as being particular to the settings in which accounts occur and to the time frame encompassed in the data collection processes. As events change and new understandings occur, behavior and responses can be expected to undergo alterations. What is recorded in the accounts may or may not reflect a sense of reality to the interviewees at another time or in a different set of circumstances.

Experiences of entry, role learning and cultural adaptations of academics to Athabasca University are reported in Chapters 4 - 7. This final chapter presents findings, conclusions and implications which arose from this study.

Findings of the Study

The study was developed around four exploratory questions.

1. What factors led to the initial career choice in distance education?
2. What was the nature and impact of encounter experiences for academics entering a distance education facility?
3. How do academics perceive themselves as they fulfill their roles as distance educators?
4. What are the implications for researchers and policy makers in the fields of educational administration and organizational behavior?

The first three of these questions will be discussed in the next section. Conclusions and observations which seem to arise from the findings will form the following section. Implications of the study will be presented in the final section.

What Factors Led to the Initial Choice In Distance Education?

The six individuals who comprised the group of key informants were seasoned veterans of academic life. With a median age of 47, they had a wide range of both professional and applied experience before seeking a position with Athabasca University. Five of the respondents had PhD level training and two of these were senior people hired to the full professor designation. The sixth possessed credentials in an academic area which has few qualified practitioners at this stage of its development.

As part of their extensive backgrounds in academic work, these individuals had been exposed to a variety of post-secondary environments where they observed, apprenticed and in most cases, practiced academic roles. Experience in a series of similar positions prior to employment in a like organizational setting is termed "mediated entry" (Corcoran and Clark, 1984) or the facilitation of role adaptation through exposure to, and practise in, the role. Through these previous socialization experiences, individuals likely would have formed notions about academia as it is practiced in certain locales and about academia as it might be expressed in the "ideal state". Prior experiences might be expected to form the basis for behavior and attitudes in the new work situation.

Except for two academics who had held part-time positions with Athabasca University prior to appointment, the key informants had little knowledge of either a distance education institution, or the roles they would be expected to perform within it, before applying for an academic position. As the philosophy, mode and mandate of a distance education can be quite different from a more traditional university, it could be expected that at least some pre-formed beliefs and behaviors would not be appropriate in the new setting. Some of the interviewed academic members reported encountering significant differences when they matched prior expectations with on-the-job experiences.

Academics responding to this study had made significant commitments to their academic fields before applying to Athabasca University. If a vocation is thought of as a divine call to perform a particular mission (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1976), then several of these academics spoke as though they had also responded to a call to their academic disciplines which originated beyond the level of their conscious choices. The phrase, "It chose me, I didn't choose it", is indicative of this type of response. Others spoke of their dedication to the practice of their disciplines as characterized by "missionary zeal" and "dedication to the cause". Moreover, the pursuit of their particular areas of learning had led most of them to seek a variety of locations and experiences, ranging to points around the world, at some personal costs.

All but one of the academics who were interviewed had practical experience in their fields, ranging from technological applications, to work with disadvantaged intercultural groups, to private and public business environments. Return to an academic environment was a conscious choice made by these academics. The overall implication is that the key informants were a dedicated group of individuals who had chosen the academic way of life, mindful of at least some of the consequences of that choice.

Virtually all participants applied for a job with Athabasca University because they were looking for secure employment in an academic tenure-track position. Contributing factors influencing the decision to accept employment included location in Alberta which was important for those who wished to be near home, family and friends. Particular attributes of the job were attractive to others, such as the opportunity to build an academic department, technological expertise which could be applied to the delivery methods of Athabasca University, the egalitarian concept underlying the University's mandate and an opportunity to contribute to a disciplinary area. As well, some lure was exerted by the general life-style usually found in academic positions.

Information indicating that a job was available at Athabasca University was obtained in three main ways. Position advertisements placed in mass media publications and educational "trade papers" was one source of job information. Others networked through acquaintances and family members who had the information and who knew the individual was looking for academic work. A third method was employed by the individuals who distributed copies of resumes in what is known as a "blind" search for a job.

Participants apparently did not choose Athabasca University primarily because it was a distance education institution, but because it was an academic job which offered itself when one was needed. In general they did not state a particular desire to become involved in an innovative mode of education. However, consideration of their backgrounds indicates that each of them has taken an entrepreneurial approach to their lives. As well, each has experienced at least one career shift which would seem to indicate a certain independence. Each has apparently been willing to take risks in their lives in order to further their professional growth. These factors would seem to indicate that, at least in some fashion, the individuals who chose to continue their careers at Athabasca University had some unconventional attributes which would appear to bode well for an "organizational fit".

What was the Nature and Impact of Encounter Experiences for Academics Entering a Distance Education Facility?

The first face-to-face communication with Athabasca University, for most of the key informants, was the employment interview. Administrators who contributed their views to this study indicated somewhat divergent criteria desirable candidates would be expected to meet. As one or more of these administrators would be involved, at some level, in virtually all academic hirings, applicants would need to be prepared to exhibit a range of personal and professional attributes to meet the varying criteria. Generally, these desirable attributes were not overtly shared with the interviewee either before or during the interview, although some application expectations could be anticipated by reasonably sophisticated interviewees.

For the most part, the interview experiences were recalled rather vaguely by the contributing academics who tended to remember few details concerning the experience. A notable exception was the "memorable moment" syndrome. These "memorable moments" were rather startling flashbacks of some incident surrounding the interview in which individuals seemed to feel that they had exposed themselves to certain gaps of credibility as professionals or as individuals. These memories have apparently remained strongly entrenched in the key informants memories, and their recall occurs with much the same impact as the first experience.

Upon being offered the position at Athabasca University, the interviewees had to decide if they would accept. Lack of apparent options in the current job market was a deciding factor for a number of the academic interviewees, who tended to indicate that they felt fortunate to have an acceptable job available to them. Contributing factors which also influenced position acceptance were status considerations, an opportunity to achieve other personal and professional goals and a desire to return to academic life.

Likely, the decision to accept the position offered by Athabasca University was taken as a response to circumstances leading up to the decision. None of the reporting academics indicated that their life situations, up to that time, were satisfactory for one or more important reasons. It would seem that employment decisions were made to solve existing problems, rather than to create significant new possibilities.

Prior to actually starting to work in the organization, the key academic informants established a set of expectations concerning their new positions. With entrenched notions of the academic role, they felt that there would be few surprises although they anticipated that the absence of on-campus students would create an unusual academic atmosphere. Writing courses, for example, was an activity that they anticipated would be similar to the process of preparing for semester classes. Administrative work was not anticipated to be a problem, nor was the dedication of the organization to innovative techniques, particularly in the area of technology, expected to be a negative factor.
At least one of the reporting academics expected the institution to resemble a "zoo" as it responded to the

government-imposed decision to relocate to the town of Athabasca. The institutional transition, however, appeared to proceed in a relatively orderly manner. Sufficient and stable funding to accomplish personal and organizational goals appeared to be available. Respondents who moved their families to Alberta did not seem overly concerned about the location of their work place, and were prepared to make necessary adjustments -- at least in the short term. Generally, new academics expected that, to a considerable extent, life in the new organization would essentially be "business as usual".

Administrators were aware of some of the difficulties that face newcomers upon entry into Athabasca University and made some effort to alert recruits to the adjustments they would be called upon to make. Among these were the transition to the dual teaching functions of course writing and course delivery, lack of face-to-face contact with students, less and more fragmented research time than they might have anticipated, and more extensive contribution to committee work than might be expected at a larger university. Using these guidelines, academics were expected to set their own goals and determine their own priorities. Likely, the complexities involved in operationalizing some of these guidelines contributed to the a considerable length of time it took many newcomers to adjust to the new work situation.

Encounter. The actual situation academics encountered elicited some "surprise" reactions both of a positive and of a negative nature. On the positive side, a less fractious work environment was found than had been anticipated by one of the respondents, and at least one recruit expressed satisfaction that the organization had given him clear- cut guidelines with which to approach his new job.

Among the unanticipated "realities" of the job were extensive time commitments to organizational priorities, unanticipated complexities involved in writing courses, the volume of administrative duties, the relative lack of technological sophistication, and the perceived lack of professional status and measurement criteria for academic ranks.

The move to the town of Athabasca, while acceptable in the short term for some reporting academics, created some long-term problems for them and their families. One resolved the situation by moving his family closer to city amenities and traveling 90 miles each way to work in Athabasca. Another stayed in Athabasca, traveling frequently to the city. Under these circumstances, both reported finding it difficult to bring full commitment to either locality.

The first days on the job were recalled with some amusement by the majority of the informants. The institution was undergoing considerable turmoil in terms of reestablishing itself in the town of Athabasca. Newcomers were paid little specific notice. Colleagues first encountered were viewed in dramatically different ways. Some of the academics' accounts suggested that fellow staff were forward-looking, enthusiastic, friendly and helpful -- comments that likely reflected interactions among particular individuals. The over-all atmosphere, however, was depicted as negative, pretentious and characterized by belligerence between competing individuals and groups.

As individuals encountered the new organization with all its demands on their energies and attentions, their personal lives continued to exerts other demands. A variety of life situations impinged on the energies available to individuals who were encountering stress in understanding the new organization and operating effectively within it. Thus, these academic members reported experiencing added stress in coping with several levels of concurrent change.

Course Development. Perhaps the most immediate challenge that faces new academics upon entry into Athabasca University is the requirement either to write a new course or to revise an existing one. On first consideration, incoming academics thought this task to be easily enough accomplished given past experiences in preparing for classes, added to the expected extra time available in not having to actually teach classes. The reality proved to be somewhat different.

For those who had not been involved with freshman level or generalist courses for many years, there was a question of re-entry into the subject matter along with extensive work to catch up with the field. Even for those who had current knowledge, the process of writing stand-alone courses, which incorporate the requirements of distance students while meeting institutional standards, was reported to be more difficult than anticipated. In particular, the level of detail required, clarity in writing and course design were cited as significant organizational learnings. Moreover academics were often asked to adopt new responses toward subject matter, its presentation and the needs of adult learners. New attitudes and skills required to write distance education courses seemed to come as a considerable transition shock to academics who related that they had not given previous extensive consideration to the area of teaching and learning as an integral part of the educational process.

The term "production house" was used to describe the interdepartmental processes involved in getting a course "on the shelf" or ready for student use. Learning this process and interacting with various institutional agencies in appropriate ways seemed to require significant organizational learning for most academic newcomers. Some assistance in this learning was provided by Instructional Designers, Editors and Visual Designers, who had been assigned to perform roles in the production process as members of the course team. While various course team members acted as guides for the first-time course writer, it was usually the Instructional Designer who emphasized the creative aspects involved in producing high-quality learning materials. Assistance provided by these specialists was of value to the participants. However, in many important ways, the key informants reported, there was insufficient direction and attention to help them develop new skills and attitudes required for course development activities in a timely and efficient manner.

Course Delivery. Adjusting to the demands of course delivery at Athabasca University posed another challenge for new academics. One such challenge that academics reported was an understanding of and adaptation to the needs of part-time adult students for whom pursuit of educational goals is seldom a focus of their life activities. Distance education students were reported not to exhibit as high a level of enthusiasm for their academic work as regular class-room students might, although this observation may be situational rather than general. However, a combination of what is perceived as low student motivation and inadequate personal contact with students, complicated by the intervention of the telephone as a tool of communication, were seen as serious drawbacks to the distance education mode of teaching. As well, one respondent was prompted to note that distance education "teaching" did not provide sufficient intellectual stimulation for the academic accustomed to the more traditional classroom format.

The process of course delivery through telephone tutoring was not seen as "really teaching". Academics reported that they missed the dynamic interaction that is possible in the class room situation. One may have reflected the sentiments of others when reporting that he missed the opportunity to "perform" before a group. As a rule, academics thought of themselves as "good" teachers whose abilities were not being fully utilized in the distance education mode at Athabasca University.

There was some consensus among the academics interviewed for this study that telephone teaching, with all its drawbacks did seem to work. The academics reported that they, along with their colleagues, took tutoring duties very seriously. Although considerable sacrifices were necessary in some cases to get students through courses, academics felt some pride when students met their goals, in particular when such accomplishments occurred under difficult circumstances.

Administration. Administrative functions such as responses to organizational processes, course management and committee work were more demanding activities than had been anticipated by academic newcomers. The atmosphere at Athabasca University appeared to have more similarities to a business environment than with a post-secondary learning institution, although that distinction was rather tenuously drawn by those reporting to this study. However, the apparent lag of technological systems to back up and reinforce academic management activities was cited as being a concern to several respondents.

As an organization which concentrates on print-based learning materials, and which interacts with many of its groups (such as students and tutors) at a distance, Athabasca University processes a large volume of internally and externally generated mail. Academic employees report that responding to the mail and processing paper is a considerable task. As a group, they indicated that they expend more time and energy on this facet of the role than they feel desirable or profitable to their personal and professional goals.

A significant part of the "tyranny of the mail" is student exams and assignments. These, according to formal and informal organizational expectations, are to be marked and returned to the student in a timely fashion. As the

University operates on a year-round basis, and as students write exams throughout that period, the marking tends to be a continuous chore, according to the reporting academic members. Marking, along with the administrative duties involved in managing a number of courses, producing other courses, and responding to institutional concerns, appears to involve an amount of "busyness" which faculty members report as a considerable drain on their time and energy.

Committee work is reported to form another large part of the administrative role for faculty members. Athabasca University is a small institution, but has an infrastructure similar to larger post-secondary organizations. In addition, the unique aspects of its mission and mandate often require the formation of new responses to novel situations. As a result, the 45-member faculty is usually involved in a number of decision-making bodies. Some key informants suggest that being part of these groups engenders a sense of "ownership" and participation, while others feel that the group involvement tends to be more form than substance. A positive aspect of group work, reported by the key informants, was the role committees played in socializing newcomers by introducing them to needed skills and attitudes. Widespread participation was also perceived as an advantage to meeting activities. On the negative side, academic members mentioned that a certain amount of tension and disagreement may be a by-product of committee involvement, and that the amount of time involved in these interactions may become dysfunctional for some members.

Socializers. In addition to work groups, the key informants suggested that the Instructional Designers played a significant role as socializers. IDs were reported to have assisted newcomers in understanding the principles of course design and aided them in putting those principles to use during the initial course production activity. Colleagues were also mentioned as important socializers, with supervisors and secretaries providing some information and guidance. Personal initiative in observing and instigating informational interactions assisted some of the respondents in their efforts to become acquainted with the job and with the organizational culture. However, most of the participants indicated that socialization was an informal process, characterized more by "hit and miss" learning than by the systematic processing of important organizational learnings.

How Do Academics Perceive Themselves as They Fulfill Their Roles as Distance Educators?

"Learning the ropes" in a distance education institution involved learning skills, processes and appropriate attitudes as described by new faculty members. For the most part, the key informants indicated that they perceived themselves to have become reasonably proficient in course development, production, and management and in supervision of tutors and interactions with students. They suggested that there was more to be learned in each of these areas, but that some levels of satisfactory adaptation to the needs and processes of distance education had taken place. Becoming part of the organizational culture provided other challenges for those reporting to this study.

Organizational culture, as considered in this study, is the system of informal rules and values which are learned through the experiences of established members and taught to newcomers as the "way we do things here". Entry into the new organizational culture can be thought of as entry into a new way of life.

Language. A cultural manifestation newcomers apparently quickly acquired was the organizational language. Participants used organizational terminology frequently throughout the course of the interviews and were readily able to supply referents to the terms they used. Some language uses, however, indicated assumptions about the institution apparently held by faculty members which may have been indicative of attitudinal responses. For example, the reporting academic members used words to describe more traditional universities as "real", "normal", "regular" and similar terms which would seem to indicate that they viewed Athabasca University as somehow less than "real", "normal" or "regular". In addition, the title change from "Coordinator" to "Professor" seems to have provoked a re-evaluation of the nature of the academic role at Athabasca University on the part of several of the faculty.

Although participants were able to acquire facility with the organization language with relative rapidity, other areas of cultural adaptation appeared to be more difficult and ambiguous in terms of arriving at satisfactory accommodations to the organizational environment. Particular problems were reported in adapting to organization time and space, and to personal resolutions of such cultural tensions as the nature of rewards, conflicting ideological models of the institution and financially driven "downsizing".

Time. Academic members, whose previous experience had been in more traditional post-secondary institutions, indicated that the structure of time at Athabasca University was, and apparently continues to be, a problem. Accustomed to the "rhythms" of a more conventional university, these academics reported some difficulty in adjusting to the year-round "treadmill" at Athabasca University. The term "treadmill", as used by the key informants, indicates the institutional systems of course production and course delivery, which is a coordinated effort of a number of personnel and departments, and is a function of the "open" dimension of distance education. As a continuous operation, the organization apparently affords few "chunks" of time that academics perceive as available for some forms of concentrated academic work. Significant abilities to self-manage and organize time were reported as key skills required of faculty. Although improved self-organization may assist academic members to cope with organizational responsibilities, most newcomers felt that the amount and quality of discretionary time to perform other organizationally sanctioned activities, which may be gained through these efforts, was not immediately apparent.

Space. The physical location of Athabasca University posed a number of adaptational problems for key informants. Situated near the town of Athabasca, 90 miles from the city of Edmonton, Athabasca University is remote from the neighborhood community and from the larger cultural and academic communities of the city. With many important interactions which require academic members' attention in both Athabasca and Edmonton, some of the key informants reported making and re-making decisions concerning their primary place of residence. Complicating residential decisions were several factors. One was the needs and desires of the family for accommodation suitable to their life-styles. Some academic members and their families reported feeling constricted or alienated as residents of a small town, while others seemed to adapt relatively easily. A closely related consideration was the availability of spousal employment in the smaller community. As a condition of relocation the University had proposed the hiring of spouses to the institution whenever possible. However, the employment needs of the community and the relative stagnation of University growth, among other factors, apparently mitigated against the proposal being effectively enacted.

A third factor related to adapting to the physical environment was the relationship of academic members to the institution. Some indications were given by reporting members that part-time attendance in Athabasca caused some division within the academic group. Participation in the academic community and willingness to socialize with both internal and external groups were cited as divisive factors. Moreover, individual academic members seemed to encounter some confusion as they attempted to reassess their positions with the University, in particular in relation to balancing their own good and the good of their families against the perceived good of the organization.

An additional spatial orientation that was suggested to have had significant implications for new staff members was the organizational emphasis on the individual's ability to work alone. Writing activities, the infrequency of colleagues in one's discipline, the absence of students, the distance of tutors, and the relative lack of colleagues in distance education were cited as isolating factors by key informants. Academic members reported some state of conflict in accommodating to the neighborhood community, the institutional community and the academic community.

Research. Another level of cultural conflict reported by the key informants was responding to the institutional tensions surrounding the research function at Athabasca University. Historically, the institution has exhibited some confusion concerning the role that research might have in a distance education environment. One apparent result has been a mixed record of encouraging some forms of behavior while rewarding other behaviors.

Academic informants reported a level of uncertainty involving the research activities they could best be involved in as they sought to adapt to their new roles. Some expressed little interest in, or enthusiasm for, doing research as neither the facilities nor the time appeared to be available in the current context. Others indicated strong views concerning the nature of research with the debate ranging from "only" institutionally related investigations to "only" disciplinary related activities. At the core of the debate the divisions between "local" and "cosmopolitan" orientations seemed each to have its proponents.

Closely allied to the concern regarding contributions to the internal versus the external academic community, were issues surrounding rewards. It appeared from their reports that academic members perceived being rewarded in yearly evaluations for course production and delivery, but that these activities did not qualify them for promotion and merit pay as would be the case if they had been engaged in research during the same period.

Some of the respondents indicated that considerable support for an increased research component in the academic role at Athabasca University has come from the more traditional views and norms that the majority of incoming staff bring with them. At the same time, other organizational members indicate concern that the needs of a new and relatively innovative institution are not being well met as staff energies are deployed on concerns that do not advance the mission and mandate of the University. Adapting to conflicting views on appropriate research activities and responding to apparent reward structures have apparently been a source of tension and stress to the academic members responding to this study.

Institutional Ideologies. Basic to the cultural conflict surrounding the research function at Athabasca University has been the conflicting ideological models that have guided the institution's functioning at various times. One of these, the "ID Model", envisioned an innovative organization designed to meet the needs of the distant adult learner. Quality expertise in preparing courses would be hired on a contract basis while the production and administration functions would be performed by professional staff. The other, the "Traditional Model", would favor a more conventional faculty responding to their disciplines and to their students as they would in most other university settings. Implicit in the latter model are the notions of "credibility" and "accountability" which are common to most post-secondary institutions in Canada.

The Traditional Model currently appears to be in ascendancy at Athabasca University Research and publishing appear to be more valued activities with increased institutional support structures which some key informants recognized as enhancing their personal and professional goals. Organizational responses to student needs and administrative processes seem to become more traditional than innovative in nature, a reaction that becomes more notable when related to issues of academic and institutional credibility. At the same time, some key informants lament the institutional ideological drift. In particular, they express concerns about inattention to excellence in producing courses, the loss of the symbiotic interaction with Instructional Designers, the shift in focus from "teaching" as a core institutional responsibility and the dimunition of attention to the adult distance learner. One key informant suggested that the current ideology represents "a regression toward the average", implying, as do others, that the institution "ought" to be unique rather than attempting to emulate its sister institutions.

In matters of organizational ideology, the key informant faculty members reported feelings of conflict and stress. "Local" and "cosmopolitan" orientations appear to operate at another level -- a perceived dichotomy between becoming expert "distance educators" and advancing themselves in their disciplinary fields. An additional constraint in balancing these alternatives appears to be the need to maintain mobility in the academic profession while recognizing that mobility is not necessarily an option in today's restricted market place. Academic members, then, seem to be caught in a cultural conflict that has not yet been satisfactorily resolved.

Budget. While the Traditional Model may have the greater support within the institution, budgetary restrictions may be driving some reevaluations of the applicability of this model under conditions of economic stringency. In-house faculty may be a luxury the University will be less able to afford. Preference may be given to hiring academic experts on a contractual basis and expanding the responsibilities of full- and part-time staff. These and other changes may provoke renewed interest in the ID Model and another transition in the University's operating philosophy. Academics suggest that they feel less than secure as they contemplate their continued future with Athabasca University in light of current financial issues and anticipated institutional responses.

Budgetary considerations are also suggested by key informants to be driving significant alterations to Athabasca University's mission and mandate. For a considerable part of its history, Athabasca University was in a financially favorable condition. The organization, respondents indicated, was able to respond to student needs in a variety of innovative ways. As fiscal resources became less available, important questions concerning "accessibility" and "openness" have been addressed, apparently calling for difficult decisions on the part of organizational members. Respondents reported particular concerns about curtailing enrolments, maintaining relationships with tutors, future course development activities and continuing educational support for disadvantaged students.

Fiscal restraint, coming rapidly on the heels of relocation, has, in effect, dealt the University a serious "one-two" blow, according to some of the key informants. They report that this organizational transition is one that they as individuals, and the institution as a whole, will have considerable difficulty adapting to. Moreover, there is some indication that the accumulation of significant change factors has threatened staff emotionally, creating feels of instability, insecurity and uncertainty.

Views on Socialization. Key informants to this study indicated that they underwent a significant socialization experience in coming to Athabasca University. They reported that their professional background had been the source for certain formulations of notions surrounding the academic role which appeared to be less replicatable in a distance education context.

Respondents apparently found the new work situation required considerable adaptations of skills and attitudes. Little formal assistance seemed to be available to assist newcomers in "learning the ropes"; nor did they feel that there was sufficient emotional support throughout the process. Rather, newcomers indicate they were left to "sink or swim", a circumstance that seems to have extended the learning period and had the unfortunate effect of lowering self-esteem.

Part of the reason for feelings of diminished self-worth was suggested to have been uncertainty concerning the value or the appropriateness of their contributions to the organization. Several faculty members contributing to this study offered accounts of "upending" or disconfirming experiences during the socialization period which reflected negatively on individuals' views of themselves as capable and productive organizational members. These disconfirming incidents occurred at a time when newcomers were most highly motivated to achieve an "organizational fit" and to establish themselves as trusted insiders. Thus, newcomers may have been more than ordinarily sensitive to organizational interactions, or contrarily, have been less aware of subtle messages indicating organizationally approved attitudes and behaviors. As one informant noted, "If you feel in transition, any nuance of change or uncertainty becomes more threatening".

All of the academic informants indicated that they would stay at Athabasca University in the immediate future. However, the majority also stated that they would likely leave their positions as soon as the job market opened up or personal circumstances became more stable. Generally, the respondents were hesitant to make long-term commitments to Athabasca University, but were looking beyond it for more satisfactory and productive positions.

Conclusions

It would be inappropriate to generalize from this series of interviews with academic members of Athabasca University, but some observations can be made which appear to be significant to the socialization experiences of these respondents.

> Academic members contributing to this study selected Athabasca University as a venue in which to engage in disciplinary academic work.

The key informants in this study accepted professorial appointments at Athabasca University to obtain a job in a tenure-track academic position. Other factors contributed to the career choice, one of the most important of which was an opportunity for trained individuals to work in their academic specialization areas.

From their accounts, the reporting academics exhibited a high level of identification with their academic field of study. For example, they spoke of their involvement in a discipline as a "calling", and chose career paths in which the discipline could be added to in terms of increased acquisition of theoretical knowledge and creative application of that knowledge in a variety of circumstances. However, overall, their employment records would seem to indicate less identification with particular places of employment. In their accounts, academic members reported that they tended to change jobs and to shift between academic and practitional positions as personal and professional circumstances indicated.

As academic theoreticians and practitioners, the key informants seemed to have developed constructs concerning the way the world "could" or "should" operate. In several accounts they refer to themselves as idealists. Moreover, they recount incidents in which they "burnt out", apparently from excessive dedication, or left positions that did not match their value systems. Much of their career activity could be accounted for as a search for a more "ideal" life state.

From their reports, it appears that these academic members tended to choose Athabasca University not as a positive career step but as an opportunity to resolve other differences and difficulties in their lives. Rather than going "to" something, they appeared to be going "from" certain life situations. Although their dedication to their academic careers would have been important selection considerations to organizational members, there may have been little thought given by hiring committees as to the potential "fit" of that dedication with the needs of the institution.

In choosing Athabasca University as a workplace, some of the key informants may have felt they had significant skills and abilities to offer the institution. The variety of educational and experiential background academic members brought to their new work situations may have been seen as beneficial to the employing organization. Presumably, the breadth of professional involvement would have equipped newcomers to be flexible in response and adaptable to novel situations. However, the skills and abilities incoming academic members had attained did not appear to have significant relevancy to the new situation, or were not seen as valuable by established organizational members, according to the accounts of key informants.

Whether the experiences of the reporting academics can be generalized to the academic staff at Athabasca University is not known. However, there are some indications that similar attributes are present in other faculty members. Administrators, for example, speak of the tendency for the University to hire traditionally oriented people. They also mention that specialists are often hired when generalists may be more appropriate. As well, a variety of members indicate a tension between the needs of the organization and the needs of the individual which may discourage commitment to a new "way of life".

Academic members experienced a transitional event.

The accounts of key informants appear to have relevancy to the definition of transition advanced by Hopson and Adams (1976) which suggested that in order for a transition to occur, individuals experience a discontinuity in their lives which they are aware of and which evoke new behavioral responses to the new situation. In adapting to the new work setting, individuals indicated self-identity strain and the need to adopt new coping strategies to revise their assumptions of self as predicted by Nicholson (1984) and Hayes and Hough (1976).

At least some members of the reporting group had not heard of Athabasca University before applying for a position. These individuals, and others contributing to the study, reported that their expectations appeared to be somewhat incongruent with the experienced reality. In particular, key informants reported that expectations concerning their interactions with students, the process of course development and the role of research, among other facets, were different than their actual experiences on the job. In this respect, Van Maanen (1977b:16) quotes James (1892) as having observed long ago that "knowledge about" and "experience of" a phenomenon imply quite different levels of understanding. For some of the academic members in this study, the actual experience seemed to provoke a rather profound re-examination of the academic role as they had understood it.

> Organizational socialization is a multiple transition process.

If transitions are thought of as life discontinuities, and socialization is thought of as the process of becoming a functional member of a community, then transitions appeared to have occurred in more than one life area, and socialization processes evolved at different levels of individual lives, according to the accounts of key informants. At one level, they report their experiences with role encounter. On the job, new skills, attitudes and behaviors were acquired by newcomers in a number of work activities, some of which were quite novel to the new academics. Some of these activities occurred more or less simultaneously, and each required adaptational efforts on the part of newcomers. In addition, acquiring organizational role learning and becoming part of the cultural fabric called upon the ability of new members to ascertain organizational nuances and attempt to find within the environment a personal fit or balance.

As well as adapting to the job, reporting members had families who were also adjusting to the altered situation. Change of employment for one family member meant change in living conditions, life-style and personal relationships for the others. In some instances, organizational policies and organizational actions had significant effects on family members, particularly in terms of their living arrangements and their own job opportunities. Nor were family relationships always stable, and the pressures involved with dealing with these crises had an impact on the individuals who were also attempting to adjust to new and demanding professional positions.

New employees were also adjusting their personal lives and their self-perceptions to meet the circumstances of the position and the living environment. Being in this "unfrozen" state (French et al., 1985), meant that newcomers were experiencing ambiguities in resolving differences and stress in adjusting to the new environment.

As a number of transitions were occuring, academic members were experiencing related tensions and stress in a variety of situations. The effect tended to be cumulative, with reporting members suggesting considerable levels of confusion, instability, and in some cases ill health.

There was also some indication that role adaptations occurred at different rates. Facility with organizational processes, for example, seemed to be influenced by the degree to which the process is formalized and routinized.

Course production, for example, is reported to be a relatively repetitive process, which, once learned, can be performed, with some variations, each time the activity is called for. As a relatively stable and predictable aspect of role performance, course production information can be accessed from a variety of organizational sources, and the behaviors newcomers learn can become, relatively quickly, part of an emerging repertoire.

In contrast, other role activities which have few established guidelines or which have guidelines the newcomer is unable to access, may require an extended learning period by the recruit who then resorts to a "trial and error" method of learning. An example of this category of role learning may be, as suggested by Schein (1978), the establishment of a "psychological contract" between the organization and the individual. Schein (1978) indicates that this contract, although implicit, is a real expression of strong expectations from each party for future relationships. As faculty members perceive differences between stated policies and policies-in-action, and note differences between what is required and what is rewarded in the organization, there would seem some distance to go before a satisfactory psychological contract is formed.

A second category of role learning which appeared to affect adaptational rates seemed to relate to the carry-over effects of previously learned skills. For example, one faculty member was observed to have developed an exceptional delivery model soon after initial employment, but continued to be unsure of his ability to develop a course that would be fully responsive to student needs. This person has a systems background. Another found that she enjoyed writing courses and could perform with relative ease in that area, but she was having so much difficulty adapting to organizational decision-making processes that she was considering leaving her position. This academic member is involved in a discipline which requires logical thinking.

Closely related to the degree to which new role requirements match previous learnings as an influence on facilitating role acquisition may be the degree to which task-related activities build on individual strengths. For example, developing learning models appropriate for particular course needs or creating positive working relationships with tutors may be on-going developmental activities which are more a product of an individuals knowledge, interest and interactional skills than of institutional intervention.

An additional factor affecting the rate of role learning may be that, by their nature, some role learnings are largely informal and dynamic in nature, and tend to evolve throughout the career process. An example would be the activities involved as group members negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity or "who we are" and "how we do things around here". Learnings in this category tend to be developmental in response to changing people and changing times.

> Most academic members at Athabasca University have yet to achieve an "organizational fit" after more than two years on the job.

The organization implicitly announces that an individual has achieved a satisfactory "fit" when tenure is awarded (Schein, 1978). As part of this process, the organization, through one of its committees, evaluates the new employee through application of established criteria and consideration of established members' reports. When the applicant's status is altered to that of "continuing appointment", it is understood that an organizational hurdle has been passed and that satisfactory accommodations to the needs of the organization has occurred.

Individual members report that they experience more ambiguous feelings toward the organization. For example, they indicate that Athabasca is not a "real" university and that they do not "really" teach. Students are absent from the campus, academics are isolated and the University doesn't have the "rhythm" to its operations that it "should" have. Moreover, key informants suggest, the University does not have a clear vision of itself, and therefore individuals experience difficulty in establishing clear commitments and developing straightforward responses to organizational needs. In Etzioni's (1970) terms, individuals have yet to determine the amount of freedom they are willing to give up and the degree of compliance they are willing to give to organization demands.

The metamorphosis stage of socialization is described by Corcoran and Clark (1984:135) as the stage of role continuance wherein "the new member has internalized role specifications, a sense of satisfaction with work, and a high degree of job involvement and job commitment". Part of the reason some key informants in this study may not have reached the definitional metamorphosis stage may have been suggested by Schein (1978) who introduced the concept of "internal" and "external" careers. External careers relate to organizational development as the new employee and the organization define, over time, the employee's areas of talent and long-range contribution. Internal careers are the "career anchors", or self-perceived talents, abilities, motives, attitudes and values, which are developed through work experience. Academic member reports would seem to indicate that at least some of those career anchors have been challenged and perhaps disregarded during their employment period at Athabasca University. Situational concepts of a "community of scholars", notions of individual worth and continued appropriateness of values have attacked some of the bases of reporting members' established success parameters.

An additional indication that reporting academics are experiencing difficulty in achieving an organizational fit may be found in the accounts that indicate that some faculty members continue to apply "old templates" to new situations. Golan (1981) and Louis (1980) are among those who point out the dual nature of the transitional process. As an old role is given up, and a new one taken on, a double process of learning and adjustment takes place. The person must relinquish or "let go" of the old role before gaining satisfaction in the new. Van Maanen (1977b:16) indicates that these double adjustments take place in most areas of life when a new job is taken on, including "matters concerning self, friendship, privacy, time, competence and demeanor".

One way of coping with adjustment to the new is to carry forward patterns of behavior or attitudinal responses that were successful in the past (Kubler-Ross, 1969). Evidence of this adaptational response can be gathered from the accounts which suggested respondents tended to apply more traditional models to a distance education setting. In particular, themes of discomfort with organizational time, space, production focus and research activities as related by informants would suggest that some individuals have not fully "let go" of previous experiences in adapting to new situations.

A theme that has run through this study has indicated that individuals reporting to this study were in varying stages of anomie or a state of experience marked by feelings of anxiety and confusion. Anomie would seem to relate to the experiences of individuals undergoing the initial transition states as suggested by such writers as Kubler-Ross, (1969), Hopson and Adams (1976) and Golan (1981). In this situation, Van Maanen (1977b) suggests, individuals attempt to "normalize" the situation. "Normalizing" in this instance refers to the individuals efforts to discover where he or she fits into the scheme of things. Van Maanen's normalization phase would appear to be akin to the Kubler-Ross (1969) stage of seeking realistic alternatives and the Hopson and Adams (1976) stage of reality awareness as expressed in their transitional models.

From the accounts of individuals contributing to this study, it would appear the majority seem to hover between the stages of anomie and normalization. A contributing factor to this stage of transitional development may be the changing nature of the individual, the organization and the environment. Much of the work done by the "transitionalists" relate to individual transition events such as the transition between being a living person and a dying person, between self-concern and parenthood and between childhood and adulthood. In an organizational context, transitions and transitional changes can also be seen to occur, but the changes are multiple and often elusive. Individuals must cope with changes to themselves and their families as well as to an organization and an environment which, in this age of turbulence, rarely settles down long enough for an individual to fully grasp one change before another occurs. Under these circumstances, it may be more difficult for individuals to "normalize their experiences". Rather, individuals may tend to involve themselves in repetitive decision making, often over relatively trivial matters, in an attempt to reach a bed-rock position from which normalized responses can begin to occur.

This coping strategy may be particularly justified in an environment where a number of significant changes have taken place within a short period of time. The individuals responding to this study arrived at Athabasca University just as the organization and its members were encountering the trauma of relocation, and there are indications in the accounts that some aspects of relocation continue to reverberate in institutional functioning. Closely following that event were severe budget restrictions, which the institution was ill prepared to cope with, including questions related to the organization's present and future relations with staff.

As approximately 20 of the 45 member academic staff at Athabasca University were hired prior to 1980, the year the relocation policy was announced, it could be inferred that at least some of staff have progressed through the transitional models to stages of acceptance of the academic role at Athabasca University, if they haven't moved on to perspectives of personal and professional growth within the organization. With a minimum of seven years in which to make a decision or to find alternative employment, those who remain with the University might be expected to have progressed through some of the worst stages of anomie and arrived at personally acceptable levels of accommodation. Established academic members may have attained a job-maturity dimension that seems to have eluded more recent members to this point. It may be, however, that with support and experience, newcomers will find greater job satisfaction and commitment.

Implications

This study was designed to describe the transitional experiences of in-coming academic members at a distance education institution. In the discussion to this point, the accounts of organizational participants, drawn from in-depth interviews, have provided information that depicts organizational role and cultural learnings from the perspectives of newcomers. As this study was conducted in one setting with six key informants, supplemented by the reports of seven other organizational members and the perusal of certain organizational documents, caution must be utilized in drawing generalized implications to either the faculty as a whole or to other distance education institutions. It is possible, however, to draw some implications for researchers and policy makers in educational administration and organizational behavior.

Implications for Administrators

Raelin (1983) suggests that management, in employing professionals, acquires a valuable resource which must be handled with great care. Academic personnel achieve their status by accomplishment rather than through inherent qualities or advantageous relationships with others. Professional expertise, gained at considerable societal and personal cost, tends to be a scarce resource which is considered valuable to the larger community.

As professionals, faculty members tend to respond to voluntary associations with fellow professionals and are less likely to accept hierarchical sanctions. Thus, academics can be assumed to be less responsive to "external" management within the organization and more responsive to the codes and ethics of the larger community which guide their professional conduct. Presumably, academic members have established larger community ties in disciplinary areas, and it can be anticipated that these will be strengthened throughout a period of an academic position. Perhaps, however, additional efforts can be made to establish larger communities in the area of distance education. There is some indication that this is being done by the organization, but perhaps not to the level of need indicated by some of the faculty members. The organization might also attempt to provide a supportive environment to assist professionals in using their expertise to achieve organizational goals.

Schein (1968) suggests that the professional is an expert only in his profession, not an expert in everything. Upon entry into a new organization, particularly an organization that differs in significant ways from sister organizations, the academic professional cannot be expected to have sufficient background to become a functional member within a short period of time without assistance in "learning the ropes". Administrators can assist in easing the transitions of in-coming academics into the organizational role and culture in several important ways.

Administrators might undertake a re-evaluation of faculty roles to determine what academics do and which qualifications are necessary to perform these duties. Academic members report that they are hired on the basis of their educational qualifications, research backgrounds, teaching experience and personal attributes. Key informants indicate that they perceive the institution to expect performance from them as adult educators, writers, and administrators and to put a premium on their ability to work alone when not engaged in institutional meetings. Perhaps with open distance education as a relatively new player in the post-secondary area, there is not yet a "pool" or people to draw employees from who have appropriate backgrounds, as suggested by some of the administrators responding to this study. However, some refocusing of applicant criteria might be in order. As well, with the awareness that discrepancies in qualifications most applications have and the particular attributes required by the distance education institution, efforts might be made to provide counseling and direction to newcomers describing the differences and providing guidance.

Employment interviews afford an opportunity for applicants and hirers to engage in a dialogue about a possible future relationship. Wanous (1980) suggests that the interview provides an opportunity to explore expectations that each party might have of the other in the employment situation. The most productive interview situation, according to Wanous (1980) is the Realistic Job Preview (RJP) which explores the work parameters as they will be experienced in the beginning term of employment, and which investigates future possibilities. Both positive and negative aspects of the work situation are examined in the RJP.

As key informants in this study did not appear to hold realistic expectations of the job before accepting employment with Athabasca University, administrators might give attention to the information offered in the selection process. There is some indication in the accounts that administrators do attempt to provide realistic job information; however, key informants did not appear to have grasped the implications involved in these communications. To provide further opportunities for newcomers to gain insight into the organization, administrators may be able to discover a variety of means to provide applicants with opportunities to investigate the environment before they accept a position. Particular care might be given to describing distance education terminologies and processes.

During the period of the initial encounter with the organization, newcomers tend to feel lost and bewildered. Assigning mentors to new academic members may be of help. Depending upon the situation, administrators may wish to provide recruits with more than one mentor such as a job mentor and a social mentor. The job mentor might be a trusted organizational veteran who would oversee the introduction experiences of the new member and be available for consultation and direction as the need arises. The social mentor would be charged with introducing the newcomer to the neighborhood community and could act as a resource to the entire family, if appropriate. It is possible, of course, that the two mentor roles could be combined in one member, or that the social mentorship role might be accepted by a non-organizational person. However, the experiences of the academic members reporting to this study indicates that the presence of some person or persons they could have freely turned to for assistance would have been a valuable support to them during their first months on the job.

Key informants were unanimous in stating that they perceived their organizational learning experience to be "haphazard" or characterized by "trial and error". Administrators might respond by preparing some learning materials which could be accessed by newcomers as needed. Of particular help would be: a listing of key organizational members, their role in the organization, and how they can be contacted; a description of the routing of the paper flow; a forms package which indicates those papers to be signed and sent on, those to be kept for future reference, and those for information only; and a description of the course production process and information on adult students and learning models. Administrators might also consider the format learning materials would appear in. Some combination of computer assisted learning programs, print, audio, or visual representations and tutorial support might be arranged to provide the newcomer with skills and information that could be easily accessed.

Jonsen (1986) notes that academic professionals tend to be resentful of direct supervision. As one account in this study noted, "things do happen through the haphazard method". Likely, however, providing opportunities to get information and forums in which to put the information into context, is an important socialization process that can be guided by administrators. In this study, some key informants indicated that important learning occurred through their own initiatives. Administrators could be helpful in this process by smoothing the way for newcomers; that is, by introducing them to groups and individuals and creating an atmosphere where further exchanges can take place between new faculty and other organizational members.

Through sincere efforts by both parties, relationships between management and incoming professional staff should be characterized by genuine mutual concern for achieving the maximization of the individual's talents and abilities in reaching organizational goals.

Implications for Researchers

This study concludes where it began -- with a statement that distance education's future is greatly dependent upon its faculty resources. Throughout these pages it has been suggested that new faculty members at Athabasca University take a considerable period of time to accommodate to the institution. After a two- to four-year incumbency, many of those interviewed for this study had not yet achieved high levels of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

A beginning was made in this study to determine how faculty members react to a distance education environment. Much more needs to be done to arrive at firm conclusions. A start might be made in conducting a longitudinal study which would follow academic newcomers from the interview experience through to tenure. More could then be learned about the nature of learning experiences rather than the recalled impact of those experiences. In this way, as well, the tendency of oral historians to remember certain incidents sharply while forgetting others would be a lesser factor in the resulting data.

A further study with established academics, particularly those who were with Athabasca University before the relocation announcement of 1980, may serve to illuminate the reasons many academics do choose to remain with an distance education institution. Such information may be important to those who would like to build additional strategies for establishing a vital academic staff.

It would also be helpful to extend the study to other distance education institutions in order to test the generalizability of concepts and conclusions. The new Open University of British Columbia could be a fruitful setting in that it shares the Canadian cultural experience. However, studies in other countries might also illuminate such issues as the impact of overarching ethnic cultures on professional behavior and attitudes. Additional research might also center on the relationship of the academic to the student, the academic to the institution, and the academic to the profession in a variety of settings.

Further research should be conducted in the area of work transitions and organizational socialization. Not only is greater clarity of both models required, but the overlap between the two requires some systematization and definition. In both models there appear to be more subtleties of taxonomical categories than is available at this time. As well, both models tend to imply "single event" processes rather than "multiple event" processes, which are more often the case in organizational life.

Finally, a great deal more research is required into the relationship of organizational socialization and organizational culture. This study would begin to suggest that the two are profoundly integrated and that further study would be valuable in examining the intricacies of the two conceptually different areas of theory and research.

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